

# **Communicating Memories in Vietnam**

Ways of Engaging with Collective Pasts in the Everyday

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by Christina Sanko

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under the supervision of  
Prof. Dr. habil. Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz, University of Bremen, Germany  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christine Lohmeier, Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Austria

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**Statutory declaration**



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## List of abbreviations

AO	Agent Orange
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FIC	French Indochina
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GEN	Generation
HCM	Ho Chi Minh
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon)
LCV	Le Courier du Vietnam
MCP	Mnemonic communication practice
MCR	Mnemonic communication repertoire
MIC	Ministry of Information and Communications
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PRE	Premise
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RQ	Research question
SRV	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
SNS	Social networking sites
SVN	State of Vietnam
US	United States of America
UXO	Unexploded ordnances
VNA	Vietnam News Agency
VNS	Vietnam News Service

VNU USSH	Vietnam National University - University of Social Sciences and Humanities
VOV	Voice of Vietnam
VTV	Vietnam Television

# 1 Introduction: Tracing memories in Vietnam

## *Why researching memories in Vietnam?*

Traveling to major cities in Vietnam today, the bustling street life, dense traffic and multitude of scooters often leave first deep impressions among foreign visitors. Taking a closer look at the web of main roads that lead through urban centers of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon), one will soon notice that they do not only serve to navigate residents' ways through the city but also through time. Major junctions and alleys present spaces for public reminders of a presumed common collective past. The street banners or large-scale billboards erected there hint at historical events or figures considered to be important for the country and its people, e.g. the "liberation"<sup>1</sup> of Saigon in 1975.

The great visibility of historical cues in public spaces led Sharon Li-Lian (2001, 383) to describe Vietnam as "almost a memorial ground in itself". Historian Hue-Tam Ho Tai (2001b, 8) similarly diagnosed a "hyper-mnemosiis" in Vietnam — the clinging on and progressive seeking to uphold memories of a particular past. In public, this "hyper-mnemosiis" is particularly promoted through efforts by the Communist Party (CPV) that first came to power under its famous leader Ho Chi Minh during the anti-colonial struggles of the August Revolution in 1945.

When communist military forces defeated French colonial troops at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, geopolitical issues of the region were internationally renegotiated at the Geneva Conference. The resulting Geneva Accords determined a ceasefire line along the 17th parallel that would effectively lead to Vietnam's partition and the co-existence of two states — the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in the north and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in the south of the demilitarized zone. These geopolitical changes prompted about one million Vietnamese, mainly of Catholic faith, to migrate from North to South in 1954 (Hansen 2009). The closure of the border and the separation would last for about another 20 years. Divides fortified in the course of a fierce civil war between the two states with international allies intervening on both sides of the Iron Curtain — this war became internationally known as the "Vietnam War" that ended with the fall of Saigon and resulted in the unification of North and South Vietnam under communist rule. With the communist

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<sup>1</sup> The expression "liberation" is set in quotes because it represents the official narrative of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and not the author's own.

take over started an agenda of building a socialist society in the South, eradicating all traces — politically, culturally and materially — that were considered "'neo-colonial poisons' (*noc doc thuc dan moi*)" of the former Southern regimes (Taylor 2001, 32). Collaborators, supporters and soldiers of the former regime had to report themselves for reeducation; others were deprived of their belongings and resettled from the city into rural areas. Wars erupted again with Cambodia and China in the late 1970s. These political and socio-economic circumstances in the few first years after unification would eventually lead to an exodus of another million Vietnamese people (Su/Sanko 2017; Wolf/Lowman 1990). Years of warfare, diplomatic failures and flawed collectivization of the southern economy and agriculture resulted in a period of economic distress, poverty and hunger (Taylor 2013, 614-617). The so-called *thoi bao cap* ("subsidy") period long had no name in official records as it brought forth so many hardships (Maclean 2008, 283).

Until this day, the CPV continues to legitimize its power and one-party rule in the unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) by publicly promoting communist achievements of past wars of liberation (Mensel 2013, 134) and more recently of socioeconomic reforms known as *Doi moi* ("renovation"). The reform policies for now present the climax of "the triumphant continuity of socialism in Vietnam" (Großheim 2018, 154). Official historiographic narratives until today are still determined by the party line. In order to disseminate and maintain a sound and uncontested public memory of a unified people, the state monitors closely historiography, education and media (Großheim 2018, 2010; Tai 2001a; Marr 2002, 2000).

At the same time, the number of time witnesses of Vietnam's past anti-colonial, domestic and international struggles and thus an important source for personal everyday accounts on 20th century history in the country are dwindling. With an average age of 32.5 (Plecher 2020), the majority of Vietnamese has no personal recollection of Vietnam's latest wars (Hammond 2013, 187) or the subsidy period (Maclean 2008, 282). The following *Doi moi* policy unleashed international cooperations, economic recovery and an influx of media technologies and consumer goods. Since then, the market has become a new player in Vietnamese society (Nguyen-Thu 2019).

The here reviewed events in recent Vietnamese history do not only represent political or economic ruptures but also had a lasting impact on people's everyday lives and family biographies. How do people in Vietnam today navigate the party-line dominated public memory of a supposedly continuous and collective past against the background of their own life experiences, mediated memories from other sources and present needs? Do the

state's propagated concepts of unity and national triumph still speak to Vietnamese's everyday — particularly urban — lifeworlds and mirror their own recollections or imaginations about past times?

"Communicating memories in Vietnam" seeks to explore the ways Vietnamese residents in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) engage with the past in their everyday lives through means of communication. It aims at examining what people themselves consider relevant about collective pasts and how they communicate about these in their lives. The work is therefore situated at the micro level of analysis while taking larger socio-political developments and issues into account.

In this work, I prefer to talk of pasts and memories in plural instead of singular, as there is no simple reduction to "a war past" or to "a colonial past". These notions may make sense if we talk in terms of historical periodizations of a country or society at large, but everyday encounters with collective pasts are much more nuanced and multifaceted. While these encounters might refer to the same event in time, it can yet be interpreted differently. For Vietnam, this is most obvious for the event of the fall of Saigon on April 30th, 1975. Officially celebrated as "Victory Day" (*Ngay Giai Phong*) and public holiday in Vietnam until today, Vietnamese refugees abroad, who have escaped in the aftermath of the communist take over, denounce it as a "Day of Shame" (*Ngay Quoc Han*) (Großheim 2010, 151). This example illustrates how past events were experienced and are still remembered differently. I therefore speak of memories in plural as well. This dissertation is based on the Halbwachsian premise that pasts and memories are collective once they leave individual minds and are articulated (Halbwachs 2008, 53). In the context of this dissertation, I understand this articulation as a symbolic process of communication with other human beings or with and through media (Krotz 2001, 49). What "communicating memories" then entails specifically and how it can be grasped as an everyday social phenomenon conceptually and empirically are major tasks and cornerstones of this dissertation.

### *Research questions and desiderata*

In this sense, the **main research questions** of this project are

- RQ1: How do Vietnamese urbanites communicate collective memories in the everyday by means of media technologies and in relation to others?
- RQ2: How do Vietnamese urbanites make sense of communicating memories in the everyday?

The focus of this work is on cities and its middle-class residents. Why? Hanoi and HCMC as the capital and the economic hub of the country respectively have always been centers of political or economic power in their regions for the last centuries. Historically, they have been major sites of power struggles, regime changes and vast socio-economic and cultural transitions. These various regencies and ruptures left traces in the urban landscape of the cities and must have so in the everyday lives, biographies and memories of their residents. The cities have further been the centers of media development and infrastructure in Vietnam. Early adopters of media technologies were the educated middle and upper classes residing there. These circumstances of media socialization and appropriation become of particular interest when making sense of particular opinions, routines and preferences in engaging with collective pasts.

The cities in Vietnam saw several waves of people migrating for education and career opportunities throughout the 20th century. The latest one in the post-reform years contributed to the emergence of new middle classes (Earl 2014, 6-9). Compared to western middle classes, Asian ones are marked by globalization and localization as well as income, education, political power, social networks and a consumption-oriented lifestyle (ibid., 18, 24). They are at the core of tackling socio-political transitions and leveling traditional values as e.g. propagated by the party and the new that follow a market logic and promise upward social mobility. Their positions, which are elitist compared to the gros of the population, are also likely to allow them more freedom and confidence in speaking their mind in an authoritarian state.

Challenges of language, bureaucracy, surveillance and required networks have left Vietnamese society a neglected research site in memory studies and communication and media studies. For the latter, the marginalization is additionally underscored by a general tendency in researching western (Thussu 2009; Waisbord/Mellado 2014) and democratic societies (Reifová 2015, 80). Similarly, the Second Indochina War has predominantly been looked at from a US- or Western perspective than from a local perspective (Margara 2012, 14; Schwenkel 2009, 50). Academic historical accounts from a Vietnamese perspective usually concentrate on macro developments instead of everyday experiences of people at the time. While memory research on Vietnam (e.g. Tai 2001a; Kwon 2008; Margara 2012; Schwenkel 2009; Großheim 2010) is not limited to what Vietnamese also refer to as the "American War" (Margara 2012), it often does not lend much attention to (media) communication specifically and people's own ways of communicating collective memories.

This dissertation seeks to meet these desiderata by integrating the strengths of three disciplines — social memory studies, communication and media studies and Vietnamese studies. Social memory research suggested that „[...] memory belongs at the core of our understanding of the social. It is the tissue that binds collectivities — from families to religions to nations — together.“ (Simko 2016, 458) While there is a scholarly agreement on memory's social function as a potential, socially cohesive force (see also Halbwachs 2008, 38; Assmann 2008, 114; Dimbath/Henlein 2015, 195), further empirical research is needed on how such associative dynamics unfold through communication with others and with media technologies in the everyday. As mass media (Beck 2010, 98) and online media (Hepp/Hitzler 2014) have often been attributed a similar social function of integration for social groups or societies at large, questions about the nature of social bonds through communicating memories appear twice as pressing in media-saturated worlds.

Through its history of colonialism, partition and unification, Vietnam represents a research site that does not only extend memory, media and Cold War research beyond the Western realm but it also provides insights on the social mechanisms and sense-making of collective memories within societies marked by tremendous socio-political ruptures, upheavals and divides. Post-socialist memory and media research (Mihelj 2017; Reifova 2015; Meyen 2013) is still at the beginning of researching the implications and legacies of socialist pasts in transforming societies after the collapse of the Soviet Union. While its impact reached much further into the global network of communist allies, research so far remains within the European context. Even fewer is known about societies such as Vietnam, in which communist regimes stayed intact and ideologically continued to follow a socialist path.

### *Structure of the dissertation*

The dissertation is structured into eight chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter presents the theoretical foundation of this project. It first reviews a selection of prominent concepts across the interdisciplinary field of memory studies with regard to their understanding of communication and media. How have they conceptualized communication and/or media technologies within their own theorizations? In a next step, particular forms and practices of communication are deduced from these basic concepts and discussed in relation to "collective memory". Since the dissertation considers "communicating memories" as entailing social interactions with other human beings and media, the chapter continues by scrutinizing the sociality of memory in prior theoretical contributions. A final critical view on popular concepts of memory studies, including

"collective", "cultural" and "communicative memory" (Assmann/Assmann 1994; Assmann 2008) discusses memory studies' shortcomings of theorizing media and communication.

In a reversed perspective the chapter goes on to examine memory as a research phenomenon in communication and media studies. The subchapter summarizes major theoretical contributions of the discipline with respect to memory research, including concepts such as "mediated memories" (van Dijck 2007) and "memory work" (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014). It further identifies four key areas of memory's theorization from a communication and media perspective: (1) public-sphere and journalism approaches, (2) media-centred approaches, (3) media-use and practice-oriented approaches as well as (4) media socialization. Communicating memories as the social phenomenon to be researched in this dissertation is located within the third and fourth key areas. It is these areas that work most closely on everyday experiences of remembering, which I elaborate on in the last theoretical subchapter. Throughout the review, I emphasize interdisciplinary overlaps and formulate theoretical premises that determine the social phenomenon of communicating memories more specifically. Given that basis, the theoretical part of this dissertation ends with the development and presentation of a heuristic, namely "Mnemonic communication repertoires" (MCRs) in order to assess conceptually and empirically how collective memories are communicated in the everyday.

The third chapter outlines the state of the art in empirical media and communication research on memory. The selection concentrates on studies within the two previously named key areas of media use and socialization. It also adds studies on face-to-face communication, a topic often neglected within a communication science discipline that becomes increasingly preoccupied with the latest technological developments. It therefore broadly discerns and systemizes memory research on interpersonal communication, audience and media appropriation as well as conflating perspectives across the two. During the review, it becomes apparent that empirical audience or media reception research treats memory quite differently as a research subject, e.g. as long-term media effects or as media practice in situ. Main empirical research areas in the subfield include the appropriation of historic and commemorative media content, news and media events as well as of music and sounds. Finally, conflating perspectives do not only address studies' cross-media and transcommunicative findings but also prior results on generational and socio-political aspects as contexts for empirically researching mnemonic communication repertoires in everyday urban Vietnam.

The fourth chapter specifically reviews media and memory research on Vietnam. By integrating historic, anthropological and media studies, it introduces to the development, infrastructure, regulation and use patterns of media in Vietnamese society. It continues to review how collective memories in the one-party state are constructed in the interplay of the memory politics of its authoritarian regimes and the everyday lives of its people.

The fifth chapter introduces the empirical study on Vietnam and its methodological design. It first discusses the complexities of the sampling and recruiting procedure before turning to the actual analytical tools. The qualitative research interview is presented as the prime research tool for data collection. A special add-on to the interview guidelines is the integration of the visual elicitation technique. The chapter describes the process of collecting and selecting empirical data during a four-month field trip to Vietnam and presents an overview of the research participants. As means of analysis of the interview material, qualitative content analysis is described in further detail as the method of choice. The final subchapter is devoted to a self-critical reflection on a white GDR-born western woman's research within a foreign, post-colonial, late socialist and authoritarian research setting.

The findings of the empirical study are summarized and presented in chapter six. It provides an overview of forms and practices of communicating memories based on collected interview data from Vietnam, representing ways of engaging with collective pasts (RQ1). Forms describe direct face-to-face, interpersonally mediated and mass-mediated encounters with collective pasts. The data shows that conversations with family and historical experts, Vietnamese state media, historical books and music occur most frequently in Vietnamese urbanites' MCRs and thus represent the main forms of communicating memories. Moreover, the chapter presents a three-fold typology of mnemonic communication practices (MCPs) that discerns (1) practices of acquirement, (2) practices of negotiation and (3) practices of contestation. Through this typology, the dissertation clarifies people's motivations behind communicating collective memories and provides reasons for why they negotiate or do not appropriate certain mnemonic content. These results therefore ultimately bear implications on how collective memories are perpetuated over time or why they are not in a society.

While chapter six discusses closely along the empirical data, the discussion chapter (chapter seven) is particularly interested in how Vietnamese residents and we as researchers, make sense of their MCPs (RQ2). It sets its focus especially on sense- or meaning-making processes with respect to (generational) socialization and social bonds, morality and ethics

as well as civic engagement. The chapter thereby broadens the perspective, assessing the ramifications of the empirical findings for wider academic discourses in communications and memory studies.

The final eighth chapter summarizes the central results of this dissertation in a conclusion, points out the main contributions of this study to various fields and addresses opportunities for future research.

## **2 Theory: Conceptualizing "communicating memories"**

In the theoretical part of this dissertation, I determine, develop and elaborate on the notion of "communicating memories" as a yet undetermined social phenomenon in memory and communication research. Among the multitude of phenomena subsumed under the umbrella term of "collective memory" (Erll 2011, 6) "communicating memories" broadly denotes collective remembering as process of communication in the everyday. In order to examine what people in contemporary Vietnam themselves find relevant about collective pasts and how they communicate about it on a daily basis and beyond memory politics of the communist regime, the dissertation requires a distinct perspective and theoretical approach. The following chapter therefore conceptualizes and specifies the social phenomenon of "communicating memories" on the basis of existing classic concepts of collective memory. It scrutinizes prior theorizations in the fields of memory research and in media and communications. In conceptualizing "communicating memories", I will trace commonalities within particular strands of theory and utilize them to define nine specific premises for approaching the phenomenon (see Fig. 1).

Memory studies have brought forth a plethora of memory concepts that contributed to the theorization of various phenomena subsumed under the vague notion of "memory". At the same time, the multidisciplinary nature of memory research and the wide application of the term "memory" for a great range of different phenomena and scientific interests has led to a field with fuzzy boundaries and definitions. Given this variety of existing research paradigms and the ever changing nature of communication research's core subject due to media and societal changes, the discipline faces similar challenges in clarifying the distinct epistemological value of "memory" for communication and media theory. On these accounts, I will look at specific theoretical intersections of the disciplines, particularly memory studies' take on media and communications (2.1) and communication and media

studies' theorizations of memory (2.2). On that basis, the notion of "communicating memories" aims to grasp theoretically individuals' communicative ways of engaging with collective memory in the everyday (2.3). Drawing from the communication repertoire approach (Hasebrink 2015; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012), I develop and suggest a heuristic of "mnemonic communication repertoires" in order to translate the previous conceptual thoughts into an agenda for empirical practice. Overall, the theoretical chapter advances the argument that these mundane ways of engaging with collective pasts can be conceptually understood and empirically researched as processes of communicative appropriation that involve particular uses of communicative forms and practices for particular social purposes in varying social contexts of the everyday.

## **2.1 The role of communication and media in memory research**

Memory as a concept was already addressed in texts of ancient Greek philosophers and has occupied the minds of great thinkers ever since (for a collection see Rossington et al. 2007). Memory studies as an academic field, however, did not emerge until the 1980s (Erlil 2017, 11). The field as such is not rooted in a common disciplinary tradition (Zierold 2006, 65). Instead it is multidisciplinary originating in various disciplines and crossing boundaries of natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities (Erlil 2017, 2). The body of literature has grown and diffused immensely over the last decades. The following subchapter will therefore review a selection of theoretical concepts of collective memory based on their relevance for the dissertation and social constructivist communication research. It specifically scrutinizes how forms and practices of communication have been addressed in academically renowned concepts of collective memory (2.1.1) before turning to clarify the sociality of remembering (2.1.2). The review on theorizations in memory studies concludes with a critique on memory studies and its lacking clarity in differentiating and situating notions of culture, communication and media in researching collective remembering (2.1.3).

### **2.1.1 Forms and practices of communication in basic concepts of collective memory**

A great range of studies on memory in social sciences and the humanities today draw from French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' (1985, 2008) works on collective memory from the early 20th century. Durkheim student Halbwachs is regarded as one of the founding fathers of a social perspective on memory that stood in contrast to psychological and individualist approaches to the subject (Olick/Robbins 1998, 109). The canonical status of his work is

largely retrospective and also part of the efforts to strengthen the coherence of the field of memory studies as Halbwachs' texts were largely unknown to the anglophone world until their translation in the early 1990s (West 2016, 456).

Halbwachs (2008) described "memory" as a predominantly social phenomenon. He argued „it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories [...]“ (Halbwachs 2008, 38). Halbwachs thereby asserted that individuals' ways of remembering are socially framed and conditioned. He argued that collective memory always occurs in relation to others as social interaction and that memories need to be articulated in order to generate meaning for others (ibid., 43). Several sociologists engaged in memory research have taken up this strand of thought and further conceptualized collective remembering as social practice (e.g. Olick/Robbins 1998; Dimbath/Heinlein 2014; Knoblauch 1999) and discursive social practices (Sommer 2018). This sociological strand of theorizing collective memory as social practice on the basis of Halbwachs' works (2008) presents the first elementary theoretical agreement this dissertation leans on. Drawing from this broad academic consensus on the sociality of collective memory and remembering, the phenomenon of communicating memories is situated within the paradigm of remembering as social practice. When I refer to communicating memories as a social practice in this dissertation, social practice is understood in the sense of Max Weber (1966, 18) as action that is oriented towards others.<sup>2</sup>

Social action (including omission or tolerance) can be oriented towards expected behavior of others in the past, present or future [...] Actual regularities can be observed within social action, i.e. in a typically similarly meant sense by the same actor; repeated or (possibly also: at the same time) widespread sequences of action among several actors. (Weber 1966, 18/23)

Weber's notion of social practice also includes a timely aspect, assuming that social action is also based on past or prospectively expected behavior of others. This timely dimension of social practice appears especially relevant in the context of memory research as collective memory is usually understood as combining exactly these three dimensions of past, present and future (Erl 2011, 6; van Dijck 2007, 21). If social practices are reciprocal between two or more individuals, sociologists speak of social interactions (Bahrtdt 1997, 35). Drawing from this Weberian (1966, 18) definition, communicating memories thus comprises social interactions that are directed towards others in past, present and future and are marked by a certain regularity in their occurrence. This basic understanding presents the first

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<sup>2</sup> The Weberian definition of social practice is differentiated here from an understanding of social practice from a practice theory point of view (see Reckwitz 2002, Schatzki 2008).

theoretical premise (PRE1) of communicating memories as the phenomenon to be researched in this dissertation.

Let us further explore the relationship of collective memory and communication that theoretically seems to conflate with regard to their understandings as social interactions. How did Halbwachs as one of the most referenced authors on the sociality of remembering address social interactions of collective memory and communication? While some communication and memory scholars noted that he remained vague about actual social processes of mediation (Lohmeier 2014, 124), others argued his works implied the role of communication among individuals all along (Keppler 2001, 144). Reviewing his main publication *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) as translated by Coser (2008), I detected three angles of how Halbwachs implicitly addressed communication in his work.

- (1) as the processes and acts of articulating memories to the social world via language (Halbwachs 2008, 43)
- (2) as the processes and acts of knowledge transmission e.g. between generations (ibid., 74-78)
- (3) as appropriation of memory objects and media technologies that can convey knowledge and can create meaning about the past (ibid., 46-48).

Whereas (1) and (2) refer to direct interpersonal communication between individuals, (3) concerns media objects or technologies such as written records, letters and books (Halbwachs 2008, 46-48).

This review demonstrates that Halbwachs' (2008) work did in fact include (media) communication, its related processes of knowledge articulation, transmission and use of objects and technologies, as aspects of collective memory. Further, Halbwachs' (1985, 34-39) conceptual differentiation of autobiographical and historical memory is principally based on an implicit distinction of interpersonal and (technologically) mediated communication. While autobiographical memory relies on events personally experienced in the past such as a wedding (Coser 2008, 24) and can be considered as the shared lived past of a social group (Knoblauch 1999, 734), historical memory is transmitted and largely kept alive through the effort of social institutions in the form of commemorations, festive activities, etc. (Coser 2008, 23-24). Historical memory is mediated and perpetuated via secondary sources (Lohmeier 2014, 126). Halbwachs (2008) refers to the involved communication processes mainly in examples of family communication or religious groups' communication without explicitly systemizing or theorizing them. What we can take away from these implicit references to communication processes in Halbwachs' (2008) work as

communication scholars, however, is that remembering as social interaction requires the articulation of signs and symbols or the appropriation of media objects or technologies that generate meaning about the past in present contexts. We can therefore assume that collective remembering as a social interaction always requires communicative practice in order to be considered "collective". It is exactly these communicative practices that make up the core of communicating memories as a social phenomenon. The second theoretical premise for communicating memories is therefore that it comprises communicative practices that create meaning about the past in present contexts (PRE2).

Communicative practices or "communicating" in the context of this dissertation are understood as specific types of social interaction. Communicating or communicative practices denote social acts of exchanging signs and symbols between individuals and thereby creating meaning (Krotz 2001, 59). The notion of communicative practice in the sense of Friedrich Krotz (2001, 48-49) allows for a conceptualization that includes acting with and upon media as objects, technologies and texts as well as communicating among individuals with or without media technologies. Understanding "communicating memories" as a set of communicative practices (PRE2) therefore offers a way of theorizing the communicative processes of collective remembering indicated in Halbwachs' (2008) work.

Egyptologist Jan Assmann and English scholar Aleida Assmann (1994) picked up the Halbwachsian distinction of autobiographical and historical memory and developed it further with their concepts of "cultural" and "communicative memory". These theoretical concepts gained wide recognition interdisciplinary and internationally since the 1980s (Erl 2017, 24). Similar to Halbwachs (1985, 2008), the Assmanns' distinction of these two major forms of collective memory is based amongst others on varying forms of communication (interpersonal vs. mediated) and their degrees of institutionalization. Communicative memory addresses memory as "a matter of communication and social interaction" (Assmann 2008, 109) and thus corresponds to the first two premises (PRE 1-2) of communicating memories here. Communicative memory according to the Assmanns (1994, 120) is based on personal interaction, everyday communication and usually encompasses a time span of about 80 to 100 years. It concerns biographic memories that are understood as experiences shared with contemporaries. In considering everyday and intergenerational communication, the concept of communicative memory appears valuable for a conceptualization of communicating memories at first, but since it was not the actual focus of the Assmanns' work (1994, 2008) it leaves open several conceptual questions as well as questions of applied research in contemporary (post-)modern societies.

Jan and Aleida Assmann instead concentrated their theoretical framework on the concept of cultural memory, which they contrasted to communicative memory. Cultural memory does not refer to a recent but to a mythological far past, whose continuation is dependent on trained specialists (Erl 2011, 31) and mostly exists in standardized, insititutionalized forms, e.g. as in festivals or certain rites (Zierold 2006, 68). Zierold (2006, 86) criticized that despite the elaborated differentiation basic concepts such as "culture" remain vague.

Aleida Assmann (2008, 98) further differentiated between two modes of cultural memory: canon and archive. Archive or reference memory can be understood as an archive of the totality of texts, pictures and actions while canon or working memory refers to an active or the "inhabited" part of cultural memory (Assmann/Assmann 1994, 122-123). The latter is highly selective and often politicized. The archive thus functions as a resource for the canon (Assmann 2008, 104). In addition to the basic orientation function, Assmann and Assmann (1994, 124-127) define the following three further functions of the canon or working memory: legitimation, delegitimation and distinction, whereby the first two refer to official memory (politics) and thus power relations and the latter to the formation of collective identity (ibid.). From a social constructivist and communications perspective the archive can be similarly regarded as an abstract totality of texts, signs and symbols that create meaning about collective pasts.

Although J. Assmann (2008, 117) asserted that both, cultural and communicative memory, can overlap, the classification of these two forms of memory as standing exclusively for specific forms of communication is problematic for conceptualizing the notion of communicating memories, particularly in times of "the mediation of everything" (Livingstone 2009). While a distinction of varying communicative forms and practices of collective remembering in Halbwachs' and Assmanns' theorizations appear useful for systematic reasons, forms of interpersonal and mediated communication cannot be exclusively tied to communicative or autobiographical and cultural or historical memory respectively in contemporary societies. In a "mediated world" (Hajek et al. 2016) biographic memories are not anymore exclusively shared via face-to-face communication nor are historical memories confined to officially written records but e.g. can also be subject of a Facebook group with a common historical interest. Individuals, their experiences and actions are also part of a larger historical process in a Mannheimian sense (Mannheim 1959, 292). That means that their personal experiences and actions can become historicized and their (mediated) biographic memories can find their way into the historiographies of an epoch. Vice versa appropriated historiography at school might be compared, added,

blended with narratives of time witnesses or own experiences of official commemorative events (e.g. Welzer et al. 2002). Zierold (2006, 92) similarly argued that in mediatized societies (Krotz 2001) a differentiation of mediated memories of an 'absolute past' and 'lived' memories of generational experience passed on interpersonally is problematic. Conceptualizing communicating memories therefore needs to account for the following third premise: forms and practices of communication concerning biographic and historical memories interfere with each other. They are entangled, blended, articulated and mediated in multiple ways and therefore require a common examination (PRE 3).

The concept of "cultures of memory" by English literature scholar Astrid Erll (2011, 2017) acknowledges the vast arrays of engaging with the past across disciplines, cultures, epochs and forms of communication. The use of the plural form in the concept's name underscores the constructivist approach to and plurality of collective memory that otherwise is often mistaken for a homogeneous entity in previously discussed concepts (Erll 2011, 37). Erll and her colleagues (2017, 94-97) distanced themselves from the common storage metaphor of memory and strengthened the procedural, dynamic, creative character of collective memory. According to Erll (2011, 6) "collective memory" serves as a theoretical "generic term for all processes of organic, mediated and institutional nature that have a meaning for the reciprocal influence of past and present in socio-cultural contexts." Collective memory in this sense is understood as a broad, interdisciplinary scientific construct that can only be examined in its specific historical and cultural manifestations (Erll 2011, 7; *ibid.* 2003, 176).

In order to analyze such specific manifestations, Erll (2017, 32-33) developed a three-level model of cultural processes of memory. In which way are mediation processes as communication processes accounted for in this model? The second and the third level of the model contain the most obvious links to forms and practices of communication. The second level addresses the "formation of specific cultures of memory", particularly techniques and forms of memory. Mnemonic techniques and forms are explicitly described as "ways of communication" and "mnemonic media technologies of a society" (techniques) and "forms of representation of the past" (forms) (Erll 2017, 32). The latter includes mass-mediated representations of the past whereas the notion of "mnemonic media technologies" remains very broad. The third level of the model refers to the "actual memory event" (*ibid.*, 33). Here, Erll and colleagues (*ibid.*) also picked up Assmanns' distinction of "communicative" and "cultural memory" to differentiate between experienced and non-experienced past whose validity still needs to be scrutinized for

communicating memories in complex media environments. Most relevant to communication researchers at the third level of Erll et al.'s model is the intended analysis of a history of reception and appropriation of objects and media of memory. The conceptual difficulty with these elements of the model despite their reference and relevance to processes of communication is that they remain analytically mostly at the macro level. Even the dimension of reception and appropriation of memory is understood as appropriation not by individuals or social groups but entire "cultures of memory" (ibid.). This macro-orientation of the model seems useful for a wide applicability for interdisciplinary endeavours and for including a wide range of mnemonic processes but it creates difficulties for defining more concrete approaches and for conducting empirical social scientific research, e.g. on how people as mnemonic actors specifically engage with collective pasts. Zierold (2006, 67) correctly criticized the unclarity about "carriers of memory" in many of the cultural anthropological works on memory that applies here as well. In contrast to Erll and colleagues' (2017) wide-reaching "cultures of memory" concept, the idea of communicating memories therefore needs to account for mnemonic actors despite institutions and clarify "carriers" of memory. Its point of departure and fourth premise of communicating memories should therefore be the individual at the micro level (PRE 4).

It is therefore worthwhile to consider sociological contributions to the field. Sociologists have regarded memory mainly as a subfield of the sociology of knowledge (Olick/Robbins 1998, 105) and studies remained often close to the field of philosophy (ibid., 109). Within the sociology of knowledge, studies mainly deal with the problem of forgetting and canon formation, asking why certain knowledge persists and others does not. Memory also occurred as a subject in reputation studies that deal with the question of how certain individuals are remembered (ibid., 130-132). Particularly cultural sociologists concentrated their work on how engagements with the past relate to contemporary social structures and increasingly focused on agency and performance (West 2016, 458; Olick/Robbins 1998, 108) that further encourage perspectives on memory as a "distinct sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites" (Olick/Robbins 1998, 112). In German sociology, Oliver Dimbath and Michael Heinlein (2014) presented several ways of how memory as a concept can theoretically be connected and integrated into classic social theories.

Also drawing from Halbwachs (1985, 2008), German sociologist Hubert Knoblauch (1999) actually introduced another concept of "communicative memory" that in contrast to put "communication" at the center of his work. The more surprising it seems that his theoretical contribution from the late 1990s found little attention in communication

scholars' work on memory. Combining strands of thought by Halbwachs and phenomenologist Alfred Schütz, Knoblauch (1999, 734) pointed out that memory is objectivated by communicative practices and forms (PRE1-3). He argued that collective memory in the sense of Maurice Halbwachs is communicative because it can only be social if it is objectivated through signs and thus presented to more than just one's own consciousness (ibid. 1999, 734). In this sense, the previously introduced conditions one (PRE1) and two (PRE2) are interdependent: collective memory can only be social if it is communicated and it can only be communicated through social interaction. Using the storage metaphor, Knoblauch (1999, 735) remarked that the knowledge "stored" in media can only become relevant for social groups if it is brought into communicative practice. In a sociology of knowledge tradition, Knoblauch (1999) calls this way of expressing knowledge in communicative practice "objectivation" (Berger/Luckmann 1967, 34). Before objectivation, such communicative practices are formed in our own consciousness that is based not only on previous lived experience, but also on mediated knowledge (ibid., 734-735). Knoblauch (1999) thereby dissolved the binary distinction of experience and mediated experience or knowledge that Halbwachs' (1985) established with his notions of autobiographical and historical memory. Notably that was long before communication scholars criticized the distinction on terms of digitization that barely played a role in memory research at the time. Knoblauch (1999) therefore acknowledged very early that personal experience and appropriated or mediated knowledge alike are constitutive for communicative practices of memory and connected to sense-making processes.

Despite reviewing these various concepts utilized in theoretical strands of anthropology and sociology, I carved out four premises so far that serve as common ground to conceptualize and situate the phenomenon of communicating memories.

### 2.1.2 Collective memory, belonging and communication in social groups

As we conceptually take the individual as a starting point (PRE4) and yet want to understand communicating memories as social interactions and communicative practices (PRE1-2), we need to take those social actors into consideration that take part in the interaction. The same holds true for the social contexts in which these acts are carried out. In this sense, Halbwachs (2008, 40) reminded us that

It is not sufficient, in effect, to show that individuals always use social frameworks when they remember. It is necessary to place oneself in the perspective of the group or groups. [...] One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but

one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories. (Halbwachs 2008, 40)

The quote does not only underscore the value of the social group context in examining collective memory, it also illustrates the reciprocity of the sociality of remembering as it is reflected in the actions of the individual and of the collective. Halbwachs (1992, 40) addressed here the interdependence of the individual and their respective social group as well as of individual and collective memories. From a communications point of view, that raises the question to what extent communication in social groups plays a role in the theoretical contributions and classics of memory studies.

One of Halbwachs' main assumptions is that memory is based on the idea of community and that it creates community at the same time because members are relating back to shared memories (Zierold 2006, 66). That is why Jan Assmann (2008, 114) also asserted that "Remembering is a realization of belonging [...]" as it generates a sense of identification in relation to a certain social entity. Collective memory in this sense can apply to social classes, religious groups, families, etc. and forges individual as well as group identities in certain time and space settings. It is supposed to level ruptures and inconsistencies within the respective social group but also within ones own identity (Halbwachs 2008, 76-77).

There are three interrelated main reasons for why collective memory is regarded as generating senses of belonging within and towards social groups: (1) common knowledge and experience and thus a common history of the group, (2) affective ties related to this common experiences (Assmann 2008, 114) and (3) norms and rules that regulate knowledge and practices of the group. How are these three dimensions related to processes of communication within and across social groups?

(1) Common knowledge or in other words shared memories about the past of the group is one element of identity-building. Members of the group share a commonality in knowing the history or "sociobiographical memory" of the collective (Zerubavel [1996] 2011, 224). The sociality of memory also includes the ability to relate to events of a group before a person joined that group. Identification with a group does therefore not solely rely on experiences and events lived through together, but also mediated ones. In the context of family memory, Halbwachs (2008, 59) for example stated that

[...]each family has its proper mentality, its memories which it alone commemorates and its secrets that are revealed only to its members. But these memories, as in the religious traditions of the family of antiquity, consist not only of a series of individual images of the past. They are at the same time models, examples and elements of teaching. They express the general attitude of the group; they not only reproduce its history but also define its nature and its qualities and weaknesses.

In this example of family memory, Halbwachs (2008) illustrated the exclusivity and selectivity of knowledge as well as the normative nature of collective memory within social groups. Although not addressed explicitly that means that a certain stock of knowledge is communicated between group members only and certain communicative practices are carried out by group members only. This of course also includes that all members also have access to this particular knowledge. The normativity in this cited example lies in the evaluation and perception of these memories by its group members, which we may also conceive of as communicative acts within a meaning-making process. This kind of evaluating of the family history provides orientation in relation to the group and its agenda. We may regard this process of evaluation as a communicative act of negotiating meanings with others or as an act of sense-making in the aftermath of the communicative interaction.

(2) Another reason are affective ties not only to group members but also to common memories. Zerubavel ([1996] 2011, 224) argued that knowing the history or "sociobiographical memory" of a group can already lead to developing emotions related to an event in the past without actually having experienced it. Jan Assmann (2008, 114) further argued that "Groups are formed and cohere by the dynamics of association and dissociation [...] loaded [...] with affection. [...] 'These 'affective ties' lend memories their special intensity.'" The affective dimension Assmann (ibid.) stresses, however, gained little attention in the theorizations of social scientific memory research. An exception is the specific field of nostalgia research that is often linked to a "bittersweet sentiment" for a lost past (Menke/Niemeyer 2018, 4; Davis 1979). From a communications angle that leads to the question in which way emotions play a role for communicating memories.

(3) A third reason for why collective memory is often discussed in the context of social groups and sentiments of belonging is its normativity. Being part of a social group comes with certain sets of norms and rules that also apply to practices of remembering. Given the implied normativity of collective memory, Jan Assmann (2008, 114) described remembering even as a "social obligation".

Collective memory in a normative sense is indicative of what social groups consider worthwhile to preserve and what they do not want to be forgotten (Assmann 2008, 111). From a sociology of knowledge point of view, the associative process between group members is also based on a shared interpretation and perception of a certain stock of knowledge (Leonhard 2014, 200). The bonding force therefore does not only lie in the common access to a shared knowledge, but also an agreed understanding about the meaning and legitimacy of that knowledge or memories among members of the group. In

terms of communication that means that members of the group perceive the common knowledge in similar ways and agree on the legitimacy of the dominant meaning of that knowledge as defined by the group.

Collective memory and its normativity further manifest in institutionalized common acts or rituals of the group. Rituals according to Steve Lukes (1975, 291) are a "rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance." We can therefore understand ritual acts as social practices that follow certain rules, carry symbolic meaning and are significant to an individual or social group.

Established rituals are for example the commemoration of heroic actors, spirits or events that a particular group or society considers important. Commemorating in particular is a ritualized act of remembering and recognizing the past that creates an imagined continuity with former times (Schudson 1992, 59). The common exercise of such ritualized acts fortifies social bonds and represents an act of solidarity in a Durkheimian sense (Coser 2008, 25; Dimbath/Heinlein 2015, 195). Particular holidays can provide an institutionalized occasion for such commemorations and celebrations (Bloom/Etzioni 2004).

Practices of collective remembering, notably in research on nostalgia (Menke 2017; Davis 1979), has been linked to ideas of individual's or group's coping or resilience towards processes of social change.

Just as no organized entity, be it a person, a group or some larger collectivity, can for long retain its integrity (and thus in some sense survive) in the face of too many changes occurring too rapidly in succession, so, at the other extreme, is survival threatened by the failure to adapt to either changed environmental conditions or altered internal demands. (Davis 1979, 32)

In this sense, rituals create a sense of stability and social order in times of changes.

From a communications perspective the questions arise which communicative practices are involved in the group rituals and how norms of remembering are negotiated and established by communicative means. We can also assume that articulated memories or mediated forms of memory are therefore subject to *norms* and social conventions of a given group or institution. According to Halbwachs (2008, 50) such norms of remembering should not be conceived of as social constraints or as illegitimate within a social entity. He stated that the feeling of identification and communism within a group is created through memory that "gives us the illusion of living in the midst of groups which do not imprison us, which impose themselves on us only so far and so long as we accept them." (Halbwachs 2008, 50) For the social phenomenon of communicating memories, these common points

in theorization on the normativity of collective memory provides another term and condition: communicative practices individuals apply when engaging with collective pasts are usually accepted and considered legitimate by the individual and correspond with their normative views and values. It is because of its normative nature that collective memory, its related communicative forms, content and practices are selective (PRE 5).

The normative nature of memory, however, does not only show in situations of agreement but even more so in cases of discrepancy. Such incongruities may arise when individuals enter new social groups while leaving another or in comparison other social groups or to different social groups an individual usually belongs to at the same time (Halbwachs 2008, 75). In Halbwachs' (ibid., 76) example of a woman in the Roman Empire who marries into the husband's family, she needs to abide the rules and rites of that new family. For dealing with such social, biographical and normative transitions or clashes, Halbwachs introduced the idea of *synchronization* (ibid.). In the example that means that a person needs to negotiate previously learned traditions in her former family during the process of socialization with the ones within the new family. This process of synchronizing different kinds of knowledge embodied in symbolism and ritualism that one encounters during the life course also serves to avoid conflicts. It also requires forgetting or adjustments of previous practices for the sake of new social bonds (Halbwachs 2008, 77). This idea of synchronization in the sense of negotiating different kinds of knowledge of and about the past can thus be regarded as a process of social integration into a group or society (Leonhard 2014) as it navigates social relations and one's own identity. We have to acknowledge that encounters with various social groups have become more likely and mediated given that mobility and the presence of media technologies in people's everyday lives increased. As a result navigating social relationships has become more complex in contemporary societies (Livingstone 2009, Vorderer 2015).

Collective remembering in general and processes of synchronization in particular are always determined by presentism according to Halbwachs (2008). It means that motivations of and sense-making of memory practices are always situated in the present social context (ibid., 40). This strong presentist argument in Halbwachs' work faced criticism not because the current social context would be irrelevant, but because it neglects the meaning and persistence of previous experiences and mnemonic practices. Barry Schwartz (1982, 376-377) argued that, following Halbwachs presentist argument, there would be no continuity in historical understandings at all when social structures change. A solely presentist perspective on collective memory in social groups would also contradict the existence of

communities based on a similar "stratification of experience" as in Mannheim's (1959, 297) sociology of generations. In this sense, the communities' bonds rely on similar socio-biographic experience during their formative years (17-25) of an individual (Mannheim 1959, 300) more or less irrespective of their present social position. Further, Schütz (2016 [1974], 105) argued with his idea of "sedimentation" of lived events that previous experiences and knowledge also determine "structures of relevance" (Schütz/Luckmann 1979, 160-171) for the present. The motivation of practices, the patterns of acting and their sense-making are therefore also likely to be based on similar situations of the past. According to this line of thought, individuals' collective remembering would not be determined by present interests only, but is also guided by previously lived and mediated experiences (Schütz/Luckmann 1979, 29) as well as appropriated and institutionalized social practices (Berger/Luckmann 1967, 53).

In the context of this study, I therefore assume that individuals' motivations for and practices of collective remembering are to a certain degree also shaped by their socialization and thus biographic experiences. Individuals usually do not separate their social actions in the present entirely from the past and do not easily discard appropriated and established patterns and routines. As a sixth premise of communicating memories, we therefore need to acknowledge that ways of engaging with the past through communicative practices can change, adjust or persist over time regarding the selection, negotiation and sense-making of knowledge of and about the past. Mnemonic communication practices therefore depend on individuals' own "structures of relevance" (Schütz/Luckmann 1979, 160-171; Dimbath/Heinlein 2015, 188) and thus prior knowledge established in the course of their (media) socialization (PRE 6).

### 2.1.3 Critique on conceptualizations of communication and media in memory studies

Communication scholars engaging into the field of collective memory have fundamentally criticized the vague conceptualization of the term "medium" or "media" in memory studies. Despite their frequent use of these terms, previously presented anthropological as well as the majority of sociological approaches failed to include media theories in their theoretical frameworks (Zierold 2006, 76). Instead media of collective memory in cultural anthropology are often understood in a very broad manner, ranging from natural objects such as rivers, material objects such as buildings to technological means of communication such as social networking sites (Zierold 2006, 102). Meyen (2013, 40) sees the different academic socializations of scholars as one part of this issue. The vagueness of the "media"

term in the memory studies field in his regard is problematic in two ways: first, the previously mentioned broadness in the forms and materiality of media and second, the reduction of their mnemonic functions. Meyen (2013, 38) e.g. criticizes that the notion of "media" in the works of Jan and Aleida Assmann is limited to its meaning as an archiving tool that merely carries "potential for remembering" to secure longterm communication. The anthropological academic discourse on collective memory generally faced criticism, when addressing media as technologies but limiting their role to means of storage and transfer of information. This limitation corresponds with technological deterministic views and outdated linear media effects models (Donk 2009, 18). In addition, van Dijck (2007, 15) criticized the three oppositional binaries often contained in memory studies' conceptualizations of media: 1) memory as internal and media as external, 2) the distinction between "real (corporeal) and artificial (technological) memory", 3) media use as either private or public standing for personal and collective memory respectively. While the first two are related to the common storage metaphor of memory regarding technological media devices, the latter goes in line with the previously discussed problematic distinctions of "autobiographical" and "historical memory" (Halbwachs 1985) and "communicative" and "cultural memory" (Assmann 2008) in mediatized societies. Particular modes of communication are too easily equalled exclusively with particular modes of memory.

Astrid Erll's conceptualization of "cultures of memory" (*Erinnerungskulturen*) (2011, 2017) sought to resolve some of the critique the Assmann's received on their theoretical groundwork on media and collective memory. The interdisciplinary, collaborative research centre offered a systematization of "media" according to literary and communication scholar Siegfried J. Schmidt (2000). They distinguished between a material dimension that included "communication instruments", media technologies and "cultural objectivations" and a social dimension that addresses the social institutionalization and functionalization of media (Erll 2011, 144). The conceptualization technically allows for the consideration of media technologies and media representations at a material level and their functions at a social level. Despite this systematization, the application of the media term remains broad and fuzzy in the context of the research centre. Their research also usually did not centre on media communication in (post-)modern societies (Jacke/Zierold 2015, 82) and thus leaves desiderata on the relation of communication and collective memory.

Adding to the criticism on the conceptualization of the notion of "media" in memory studies, communication scholars often criticized the limited views memory studies lend to aspects of media change. Usually, the scholarship in the field is constrained to media

historical perspectives. The Assmanns (1994, 132) for example compared preliterate and scriptural societies in their work, arguing that cultural memory can alter with the change from speech to writing. While in preliterate societies "canon" and "archive" are the same, the invention of script has led to a change in the "organization of knowledge" through the "materiality of the medium" and the new "form of communication" it represents (ibid., 130-134). This new potential of archiving knowledge enables historical awareness and changes time-and-space relations. The media historical research suggests that the alteration and differentiation of the media environment leads to a greater variety of "externalizing" and archiving options of memory (ibid., 134). While the process of differentiation of media communication is an important add-on to their work, the criticized limited understanding of media as storages and means of transfer remains. Although J. Assmann's (2013) historical research stands against technologically determinist claims about cultural continuity (Olick/Robbins 1998, 114), the authors' highly normative perspective on media change, particularly new media technologies, is problematic. The Assmanns see a risk for "speechless, technologically supported thinking" (Assmann/Assmann 1994, 131) and an "unease" for (German) cultural memory with further media development and digitization (Assmann 2013, 13-14).

Sociologists Olick and Robbins (1998, 114-115) referred to Le Goff's (1992) periodization of the history of memory when discussing media change. In Le Goff's (1992, 115-133) work the inventions of media technologies such as the printing press in the 15th century or television in the 20th century combined with social changes such as the emergence of an educated middle class and a growing interest in institutionalizing history in Western societies in the last centuries provided for "new ways of conceptualizing memory" (Olick/Robbins 1998, 115). Olick and Robbins (1998, 115) concluded that a lot of histories of memory in essence claim a "significant transformation in the experience of time [...]." Although media change was not the focus of this review either, it hints at the assumption that with the changes and differentiation of media technologies, people do make sense of the past differently. Knoblauch (1999) also regarded communicative memory as entangled with and conditioned by processes of social and media change. Knoblauch (1999, 735) argued more specifically that social processes of de-institutionalization and de-traditionalization change the way knowledge is perpetuated within a society – away from static institutions towards more dynamic flows of communication. For social groups, Knoblauch (1999, 736) argued in a non-deterministic sense that new media technologies do

not change "communities of communication" as such. It is rather the changing practices that bring forth different knowledge.

Details on how the changes in media environments interrelate with people's or social groups communicative practices, however, are usually not the focus of these works and thus leave a conceptual gap. While the differentiation and expansion of media technologies is often acknowledged it remains unclear how such changes play out in people's everyday engagements with collective pasts in contemporary societies. When discussing processes of change, most previously reviewed conceptualizations of collective memory concentrate their theorizations on the macro level. If communicating memories takes the individual and micro level as its point of departure (PRE4), we need to shift the focus on the change of communicative practices (PRE2) in order to understand how media change plays out in the lifeworlds of people, their social and their media environments. From previous macro conceptualizations we can take away the common assumption that media change brings forth differing communicative practices and specific forms that condition different ways of engaging with the past and thus selecting, appropriating and articulating collective memory. Since I have already defined two previous conditions for communicative practices of remembering, we can so far assume that their nature is affected by overall three conditions: accepted social norms (PRE 5), individuals' socialization and prior knowledge (PRE 6) and media change or available means of communication as a further, seventh condition (PRE 7). All of these three conditions interdependently affect individual's options, decisions and motivations for "communicating memories" through mnemonic communication practices (PRE 2) in a certain point in time.

The latest wave of mediatization (Couldry/Hepp 2017) and changes of media environments through digitization have also caught the attention of anthropological and literary memory scholars (Assmann 2004, 55-59; Erll 2017, 3). Communication scholars such as Jacke and Zierold (2015, 83-84), however, criticized again the normative nature, particularly of the Assmanns' work. These debates focused predominantly on the vice and virtues of digital media in regard to memory mainly, but again mainly for its archival function (*ibid.*). Erll (2017, 144) described the anthropological interest in media change as one that concentrates on how changing media technologies, their materiality and their outreach affect mnemonic practices. With digitization, she assumes that practices become more individualized and personalized (*ibid.*).

Besides these criticisms on the limited theoretical conceptualizations of the term "media" and of aspects of media change, another critique is the dominant focus on institutionalized

forms and practices of collective memory. This focus on institutionalized forms and high culture is implied in the Assmann's widespread concept of "cultural memory" and has been criticized by other literary and anthropological scholars such as Erll (2017, 110). That is why she also pleaded for the integration of everyday culture.

Very early the Popular Memory Group has similarly raised the questions "What are the means by which social memory is produced? And what practices are relevant especially outside those of professional history-writing?" (Popular Memory Group 2007 [1982], 207). The advocated shift in focus is here from dominant forms to subordinated ones and thus addresses the question of power relations in constructing collective memories, but also in how far research reproduces such power relations with its particular focus. Communicating memories needs to pay respect to how individuals as members of different social entities experience and deal with the power relations and in how far they are conscious about these in their own communicative practices.

## 2.2 Memory as Phenomenon in communication research

Contrary to researchers from other disciplines, communication and media scholars were "late adopters" (Jacke/Zierold 2015, 79) of memory research as for their deeper interest in the field is relatively recent (Garde-Hansen 2011, 1; Kansteiner 2002, 180). It was not until the 1990s that communication and media studies started to systematically contribute to the field of memory studies and advanced theories (Zierold 2006, 5; Donk 2009, 13) to clarify the relations of memory and media. In this chapter, I identify and review four key areas of communication and media studies that theoretically contributed to collective memory research. These four key areas are (1) public-sphere and journalism-oriented approaches, (2) media-centred approaches, (3) media practice- and appropriation-oriented approaches and (4) media-socialization approaches (see also Tab. 1).

(1) public-sphere and journalism-oriented approaches: Public-sphere and journalism-oriented approaches mostly concentrate in their theorizations on institutionalized forms of collective memory, the functions of mass-mediated communication and the processes of public institutionalization of particular knowledge about the past. These approaches are usually event-based. The avanguardists to integrate questions of collective memory in Western academia were journalism scholars (Lang/Lang 1989, Zelizer 1992a, 1992b, Schudson 1992). Lang and Lang (1989) were interested in the function of news for collective remembering and public opinion. They argued that past references and historical analogies in news reporting created a "memory span" for their audiences and thus reference

points to historical time periods (ibid., 127). Barbie Zelizer (1992a, 21-22) noted early that collective memory consists of various perceived versions and narratives of past events that are competing with each other. In this sense, she understood collective memory as "struggle" for public legitimacy and authority over a particular narrative on historical events such as the Kennedy assassination (ibid., 25).

In his study on the public commemoration of the Watergate Affair, Michael Schudson (1992, 221) emphasized that memory is "a constructive act". In his view, "the publicity-driven industries cultivate the memory of Watergate" (ibid., 59) and people accepted the mediation of e.g. anniversaries of the event as legitimate "cultural form" (ibid., 60). Compared to Zelizer (1992a), however, Schudson (1992, 213) added that people do not only remember in struggle for legitimacy, but also in search for orientation. Both authors hint at the significance of (media) events as reference points for collective memory. Around the same time, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992, 13/216) also acknowledged mass media as a legitimate alternative to historiography in constructing collective memory in their canonic work on media events. The approaches in this key area further contributed significantly to the theorization of anniversary journalism as a particular mnemonic genre of journalism (Edy 1999; Kitch 2002; Meyers et al. 2009; Ammann 2010). This strand of theorization showed how mass media and journalists participate in constructing collective memory as mnemonic agents as they select, witness the events and information to be communicated to wider audiences and have the potential to be remembered later on. Moreover, they create timely connections between the past, present and future (Trümper 2018; Tenenboim-Weinblatt/Neiger 2015), e.g. through narrative styles or media routines and ritual reporting.

Informed by Reinhardt and Jäckel's (2005) work on memory and (mass) media, Stefanie Trümper und Irene Neverla (2013, 10) systemized the relation of media and memory in the journalism context as follows: "(1) Media enable social memory (memory through media), (2) Media products are memory products (media as memory objects), (3) Memory is a topic of mass media (memory representations in the media)." The systematization points out functional aspects of mass media and the communicative forms in which collective memory can occur. "Memory through media" means that media as technologies and institutions facilitate and generate the public distribution and discourse on knowledge about the past. "Media as memory" can be understood in two ways: first, media products such as objects, devices and texts can be triggers for memory (Zierold 2006, 58) or second, media products are always memory products as they are reports on already past events that

in fact are artifacts of history (Zelizer 2016, 6061). "Memory in media" refers to media as media texts, the nature of their content and how they represent the past. This classification illustrates the multiple conceptual layers that memory can be researched and located at in only one subfield of communication and media research.

Some communication scholars suggested to integrate memory into already existing (social) theories applied in their field. Donk (2009, 23ff.) e.g. proposed to apply systems theory (Luhmann 1995) to memory studies, conceptualizing collective memory as a mnemonic public sphere. The suggestion of conceptualizing collective memory as a form of memorial public sphere serves to add a time dimension to the public sphere scientific discourse. Similarly, journalism scholars utilizing systems theory for memory research regarded journalism as a sub-system of society whose mnemonic functions are defined according to the structures, roles, routines and logics of journalism as a sub-system and in contrast to other sub-systems (Heijl 1992; Esposito et al. 2002; Lohner 2014; Trümper 2018) or a more encompassing overview on the subfield of journalism studies and memories studies, see e.g. Zelizer and Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2014) or Lohner and de Wolff (2019).

Most of the theoretical advancements in public-sphere and journalism approaches set their focus on the production cycles, routines and functional characteristics of forms of standardized or mass communication as well as media as professional mnemonic agents and institutions and thus are mostly located at the macro-level of social scientific analysis. In the context of this dissertation, however, they can only serve as background knowledge as they reveal little about how people actually engage with "mnemonic" public spheres, mass-mediated or standardized forms of communication representing "the past" in their everyday lives. While many of these theoretical works spotlight logics of the mediated construction of collective memory, Schudson (1992, 207) reminded us of the limitations and constraints of constructing or even manipulating the past in public communication. He argued that mediated collective memories are always also assessed against the backdrop of "living memories" (ibid.), which are based on personal experience and "attitudes towards history" (ibid., 215). Schudson (1992) therefore suggested that people's biographies and their historical interest and attitudes can bear resistances towards diverging public representations and interpretations of the past. These assertions underscore the previously discussed condition about the relevance of prior knowledge in engaging with the past (PRE6).

A second key area for theoretical contributions to memory studies in communication research are media-centred approaches. The majority of these works stems from

humanities-oriented media research, emphasising the analysis of media texts (Zierold 2006, 161) not only journalistic texts but also popcultural or personalized media forms. The theoretical contributions in this key area lead to a more differentiated understanding of the specific mnemonic characteristics of different media technologies and genres that in most memory studies literature had usually been subsumed under one vague media term. This key area investigates more closely the aesthetic, technological, material and narrative qualities specific media bear and how these condition certain mnemonic effects and imaginations. A great part of research is devoted to audiovisual media and their characteristics such as photography, television and film.

Often these approaches seek to deconstruct the media text or object that represents collective memory. Similarly to journalism approaches, media-centred theorizations often stress the constructive nature of mediated memories. Annette Kuhn (2002, 49) for example argued in her research on visual media and memories that despite the fact that e.g. photographs are regarded as "records" and "evidence" of a certain event or experience at a particular time and place, they never are a one-to-one reflection of reality. Memory and media scholars alike (Garde-Hansen 2011, van Dijck 2007) often draw from Roland Barthes (1981) theoretical thought on photography in this regard. For research on the use of visual technologies of remembering, scholars have specifically looked at construction processes of media texts to assess larger conventions of gender, class and nation (Kuhn 2002) that play into the normative character of collective memories (PRE5).

History TV has been another great concern of media-centred approaches. Until the 2000s, scholars declared television a prime source for historical knowledge (Edgerton 2001, 1; Bell 2007, 5) Its particular mnemonic meaning lies not only in its use as a resource of knowledge about past events but also in TV productions' credibility and authenticity through its richness in detail, sensory impressions and narrative in representing content (Irwin-Zarecka 2009, 155-156). By these means television can create "intimacy and immediacy" in people's homes (Edgerton 2001, 2). It has the power to personalize historical content and have viewers identify with televised historical figures or events in non-fictional and fictional formats (ibid.) and across a great variety of TV genres (Gray/Bell 2013). Ebbrecht (2010, 341) described the historiographic function of audiovisual media in terms of their power to change the non-experienced to something that can be experienced. It is this experiential momentum that also became the cornerstone of Alison Landsberg's (2004) popular concept of "prosthetic memory" that describes the enabling process of appropriating „deeply felt memories of a past event through which he

or she did not live“ (ibid., 2) through mass cultural technologies such as film and cinema. Analyzing a great range of movies and building on McLuhan's (2007) idea of media as "extensions of man", Landsberg (2004, 33) argued that "the experiential has become an increasingly important mode in the acquisition of knowledge [...]." Media-centred approaches thus help us to understand and account for peculiarities of specific media technologies and their role in appropriating knowledge or imagining "the past". The theoretical contributions of this key area provide further insights on how "communicating memories" is not only a matter of access and articulation of knowledge (PRE2) but also of through which means it is appropriated and in which specific mediated forms it is represented (PRE7).

A third key area are (3) media-use and practice-oriented approaches that focus on how individuals and social groups appropriate collective memories through various different communicative practices. This key area brought forth several theoretical concepts of memory from a media appropriation perspective. The common baseline of all of these concepts is their proximity to everyday contexts and the image of an active and to a certain degree self-determined individual who takes conscious decisions in their engagements with media, collective pasts and other social actors. This focus on the individual and its practices stresses the agency of people in collective remembering. In classic communication theory, scholars would refer to the "active-user"- or "active audiences"-paradigm (Schroder et al. 2003, 124) in this regard. Since the notion of "user", however, semantically marginalizes individual's or groups own strategies of media use or their abilities to create own media content and objects, media scholars in this key area have also introduced the notion of "memory *prosumers* (productive consumers)" (Reifova et al. 2013, 207) to the field. The notion acknowledges conceptually that individuals "[...] use their stock of knowledge in encounters with the mass media representations that they consume." (ibid.) In this way, it corresponds with PRE5 that individuals also act upon their own structures of knowledge, their prior knowledge and are selective in appropriating standardized forms of communication such as history TV. Ingrid Volkmer's (2006c, 13) even argued that the outcome of such selection processes, namely news memories and memories of (using) media technologies have constitutive meaning for how people perceive their own lifeworlds and those of others.

The "active-user" paradigm further leads to another important theoretical add-on from media-practice and appropriation-oriented approaches. That is their acknowledgement of people's various readings of media texts and thus their diverse appropriation and sense-

making of media content. Schudson (1992, 216) reminded us that one reason is the "ambiguity of stories" and media texts:

All stories can be read in more than one way. Although societies, by remembering some stories, may successfully repress others, every story contains its own alternative readings. Narratives are ambiguous or, to use a fancier term, polysemic. (ibid., 216)

The polysemy and various readings and meaning making of media texts has already long been the subject to media studies in the cultural studies tradition and were ultimately connected to questions of power. According to the cultural studies' paradigm, collective memory also mirrors power relations as some readings or interpretations of it are more dominant than others in public and society. In this sense, Lorraine Ryan (2010, 154) developed a "typology of mnemonic resistance" that borrows from Stuart Hall's different modes of reading media texts. Ryan (2010, 165) argues that collective memory "is always negotiated at the interface between the imposition of a public narrative and the reaction of the private individual." These individual responses can in reference to Hall (2005 [1982]) either be hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional understandings of dominant narratives. We need to note, however, that Hall's distinction of readings of hegemonic texts was developed in pre-digitized times and although it breaks with passive notions of the user or individual, it yet does not fully account for the articulation or creation of people's own narratives about the past, but is concerned with reactions towards public and official narratives only. Acknowledging the polysemy of mediated mnemonic content and narratives becomes especially relevant for researching collective memories in authoritarian-led societies and media environments such as Vietnam, because too often the research focus is set on the state's power (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 4) instead of people's actions and meaning-making. An eighth premise for communicating memories is therefore the polysemy of mnemonic content and narratives (PRE8).

In contemporary societies, media environments have become more complex in the course of digitization and people's media engagement is not constrained to typical mass media such as print media, TV or radio broadcasts anymore. That is why practice-oriented concepts such as "mediated memories" (van Dijck 2007) or "mediated memory work" (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014) provide more encompassing theoretical resources. José van Dijck's (2007) monograph "Mediated memories in a digital age" is one of the earlier and most impactful works in the key area of media-practice-oriented approaches. She understands "mediated memories" as

[...] the activities and objects we produce and appropriate by means of media technologies, for creating and re-creating a sense of past, present and future of ourselves in relation to others. (van Dijck 2007, 21)

Her conceptualization of the relationship of media and memory thus goes beyond the consumption of mass media and includes more openly all possible ways of engaging with media technologies and thus mediated forms of collective memory (PRE3). It addresses individuals' media practices that also generate own media products, narratives and objects such as photographs or home video. Van Dijck's (2007) concept sought to overcome the binaries of anthropological models discussed previously in order to emphasize the mutual and interdependent relationship of various forms of media and collective memory. She argued that the media technologies people appropriate and use shape collective memory and vice versa (van Dijck 2004, 361). The way media technologies are used to e.g. document and archive the first babysteps of one's child are conditioned by certain technical constraints and features of the technology as well as "cultural frameworks" consisting of habits, conventions and cultural norms about what is worth keeping and remembering in materialized form (ibid. 2007, 6-7). This way, van Dijck (2007) takes not only the social uses of media technologies and their embeddedness into socio-cultural context into account, but also emphasises again the normativity of collective memory (PRE5). In her view, it is at the nexus of self, social practices, technologies and cultural norms that remembering is constituted. Taking into account the specific characteristics and constraints of media technologies, her work further underscores the consent in theoretical works that media change and specificity or in other words the performativity and materiality of a certain media technology, affect the nature and construction of collective memory (PRE7). Van Dijck (2007) has carved out particular mnemonic communication practices of collective remembering. We learn that the use of a single media technology such as photography entails a great range of uses and thus communicative practices over time, from taking a photograph, to archiving and organizing it in an album to later getting back at it, viewing and talking about it. It is in this way that the relation of media and memory is so versatile, because the social uses of media objects, including their production, is very diversified depending on the individual and socio-cultural settings they are surrounded by. Furthermore, the sheer diversity of media technologies, texts and objects, people encounter in their mediatized everyday lives brings forth a great variety of possible mnemonic practices. With regard to appropriating historical knowledge, de Groot (2009, 13) noted that

These modes of consumption are extremely varied and incoherently complex; the common user might in the course of one day interface with the past architecturally, through television, art, fiction, game, magazine and advertising. All these practices relate to one another somehow and form a web of historical meanings and experience.

Christine Lohmeier and Christian Pentzold (2014) introduced a concept of "mediated memory work" that accounts for the plurality and entanglement of such mnemonic practices.

Mediated memory work thus encompasses practices that are brought into being to perform and constitute senses of the past that intentionally use past emotions, experiences and remnants in arrangements of localities, bodies, social relations, cultures and media technologies. (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014, 779)

It emphasizes that mnemonic practices are conscious and intentional. This aspect of purposefulness is in line with the Weberian (1966) understanding of social interaction as well as Annette Kuhn's (2010, 303) previous idea of memory work as an "active practice of remembering that takes an inquiring attitude towards the past." What is novel for communication scholars in Lohmeier and Pentzold's definition is, however, the integration of an affective dimension. It also regards media technologies as one part in a wider array of factors that construct collective memory and thus presents a less media-centric approach.

In both concepts (van Dijck 2007; Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014), the notion of "senses of the past" leaves space for interpretation. What do "senses of the past" specifically include — sensations, imaginations, knowledge or emotions linked to the past? As long as this notion remains ambiguous, it will be a difficult to theoretically discern mnemonic practices from other social practices that may also link past-present-future on the basis of prior experiences. Does the act of presenting my childhood toy to my neighbor's child as a gift already qualify as memory work?

Practice- and appropriation-oriented approaches further have a great sensitivity for the social contexts in which mnemonic practices take place and entangle with each other. Their theoretical contributions therefore provide insights on how mnemonic practices that are communicative practices in interaction with other social actors can create senses of belonging and common identity and which norms are respected in collective remembering as social group communication. With regard to social contexts and interactions, various "communities of memory" (Pickering/Keightley 2012) became sites of research and theorization such as families (van Dijck 2007; Ryan 2010; Lohmeier/Böhling 2017), generational (Pickering/Keightley 2012), diasporic (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014; Alfonso 2016; Keightley/Pickering 2017), nostalgic groups (Kalinina/Menke 2016; Kaun/Stiernstedt 2014, 2016) or activist groups (Sanz Sabido 2016). In this sense, the key

area of appropriation and practice-approaches is often concerned with the question of how such practices bring about senses of belonging and identification with a particular social group or unit.

(4) There is one more key area that in communication and media research has largely been isolated from in the disciplines' academic debate on memory and yet has much potential to contribute to it conceptually. This key area is the subfield of media socialization. Socialization can be understood as a life-long appropriation and learning process that changes according to life phases and everyday situations. Today, media technologies are regarded as agents of socialization across time and space besides family and schools (Kübler 2010, 24). The great value of media socialization theory lies in its acknowledgement of biographic experiences, including media experiences, in certain life stages and their concentration on identity formation and senses of belonging.

Media frame, attend, moderate and constitute experiences and experiences decisively and as such are more and more involved in the genesis of personality, the individual and collective history of mankind. [...] On the other hand, however, biographical resources themselves flow into processes of media appropriation as a constitutive component [...]. On the one hand, biography is of fundamental importance for media socialization, since it forms various forms of media appropriation and thus indirectly enters into the production of media-specific formats of supply. At the same time, these formats of supply constitute biographies in the form of individually significant figures of identification (media stars) and with regard to implicit and explicit offers of interpretation. (Hartung 2010, 94)

Both foci in Hartung's (2010, 94) definition of media — biography and identity — have been important dimensions in research on collective memory. Although media scholars of memory research have addressed the socialization process of individuals as a significant factor for constructing collective memory, they often did not draw from media socialization theories.

Most of van Dijck's (2007) examples e.g. deal with biographic experiences and how mediated memories are created throughout the lifecourse of human beings. Also research on nostalgia is strongly tied to people's biographies. Moreover, Zierold (2006, 58) argues that mediated collective memory provides orientation in the course of socialization about what is socially expected and accepted. In this sense, collective remembering is understood as part of a larger socialization process. In a similar vein, Ryan (2010, 156) has introduced the notion of individuals' "mnemonic socialization". She argues that it is within the family context that children usually learn and appropriate conventions of collective remembering. Institutions such as schools and media further add to these conventions (ibid., 156). Ryan (2010) thus has already referred to three typical agents of the socialization process of human beings, which includes collective remembering.

In a very similar sense, media socialization scholars grasp acts of communication as a social practice that is learned in the course of time. Notions of true or false, important or unimportant, moral or immoral are negotiated in social relations with other human beings and institutions (Hoffmann 2010, 14). Since we regard collective remembering as communicative practice (PRE 2) and thus mnemonic communication practices in the context of this research, we may assume that theorizations of media socialization can be applicable to collective memory research as well. For the idea of "communicating memories", the following further characteristics of socialization apply:

The knowledge of action necessary for communities and societies (Berger/Luckmann 1969) and the orientations of action are thus imparted in family, school, extracurricular, professional, political or even church contexts - in other words, in different environments. In these mediation processes the individual enters into symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships with the mediating authorities. It experiences reciprocal or one-sided communication and interaction relationships and it uses the respective environments or instances for socialization either compulsorily (such as school) or voluntarily (such as sports clubs), spontaneously or purposefully, consciously or unconsciously. (Hoffmann 2010, 14)

If we understand "communicating memories" as part of a larger socialization process of human beings, it is important to note that there is a continuum of voluntariness, purposefulness and consciousness in these actions. This range of voluntariness and purposefulness presents premise nine for researching the phenomenon (PRE9).

The socialization perspective can provide clues on why certain norms of "communicating memories" exist (PRE5) and how they became established. Secondly, it can partly explain which structures of relevance (PRE6) develop on the basis of these norms and conventions; and how these affect individuals' selectivity and meaning-making (PRE8) themselves, their lifeworlds and others.

Subfields of media socialization that have great relevance in the context of memory research are those on the appropriation of history and music in particular life stages. For history appropriation, Ebbrecht (2010, 341) for example distinguishes cognitive knowledge about history as it is taught e.g. in schools and affective, emotional imaginations about the past that are often connected to personal narratives in social groups or media texts. This way, he discerned different types mnemonic knowledge according to various socialization agents. Yet, both can intersect and affect each other (ibid.). Ebbrecht (2010, 343) argues that in their representations of history, mass media create own biased and simplified historiographic frames of meaning and that such frames also serve for the interpretation of own lived experiences. It is this connection between own biographic experiences and mediated collective memories that create individual affective connections. Researchers attribute music with a special affective quality in remembering because of its tight

entanglement with autobiographic experience (Pickering/Keightley 2015; Hartung et al. 2009). Music and popular culture in general, however, still present a marginalized topic in communication and memory research (Jacke/Zierold 2015, 86). The four key areas of communication theory for memory research can be summarized as follows (Tab. 1).

key area	research foci	theoretical base	concepts
<b>public sphere/ journalism</b>	public discourses journalisms memory work journalists as memory agents media events	public opinion & public sphere systems theory (Luhmann 1995) discourse theory media events (Dayan/Katz 1992) news values	sustainable memory (Trümper/Neverla 2013) media witnessing (Frosh/Pinchevski 2009) reversed memory (Neiger et al. 2014) ; global memory (Reading 2011)
<b>media</b>	media content, representations, texts and narratives; media materiality & specificity	media theory (McLuhan 2007) media aesthetics photographic theories (Barthes 1981)	prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004)
<b>practice/ appropriation</b>	communication practices media technologies of remembering media materiality appropriation and reception of mnemonic content	practice theory discourse theory media use and appropriation reception media theory (McLuhan 2007)	mediated memories (van Dijck 2007) mediated memory work (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014) doing memory (Kontopodis/Matera 2010; Rudolph et al. 2019)
<b>media socialization</b>	media biographies media and life course	media socialization (Hoffmann/Mikos 2010) media education	

Table 1: Four key areas of communication theory for memory research

Eventually, the advent of digitization and Web 2.0 sparked a renewed upsurge of communication scholars' interest in and research activity on collective memory that affected all of the previously reviewed key areas. Jacke and Zierold (2015, 85) state that in the course of media change, questions of selection, power, forgetting and institutions of collective memory become more pressing. It also pushed advancements in theory that agreed on and tried to grasp the growing complexity of memory-and-media relations. Hoskins (2018, 8-9) summarizes these changing dynamics in his latest volume:

The new memory ecology is an environment in which hyperconnectivity makes it difficult to reduce media and memory to a single or separate medium or individual, respectively. Instead the mediation of memory is seen as a matter of ongoing set of dynamics: remediation, translation, connectivity, temporality, reflexivity, across and between media and their multiple modalities and constant movements. (Hoskins 2018, 8-9)

The pronounced "new memory ecology" (Hoskins 2014, 55) has encouraged many communications scholars to shift their attention towards digital and social media platforms. Birkner and Donk (2018) even advocate a subfield of social media memory studies. Theorizations within this strand of scholarship usually emphasize social media's participatory as well as connecting affordances and thus the co-construction of memory (Garde-Hansen et al. 2016; Ferron/Massa 2011), but also its consequences of power

relations in a critical tradition. Birkner and Donk (2018, 13) have shown that social media such as Facebook can serve as a "counter-public sphere" for particular interest groups in public mnemonic debates. Kansteiner (2018, 125) further notes that such tensions over power and control over history as one mode of collective memory are particularly strong in social media.

[...] [T]ension between institutional authorial control and the consumers' desire to engage with history on their own terms and according to their own narrative/ aesthetic preferences is even more pronounced on the social media front." (Kansteiner 2018, 125)

In this sense, the agency of people in using social media for mnemonic purposes is highlighted more than ever. People are for example empowered to engage with historical information apart from academics and can create their own narratives (de Groot 2009, 59). Lohmeier and Böhlting (2017, 281) emphasize the reconfiguration of "the practices and material objects people use to communicatively construct memories." Changes or reconfigurations, however, can only be assessed in comparison to previous states.

How such reconfiguration of practices and material objects materialize in the everyday lives of people, has already been subject of theoretical and empirical efforts that compared analogue and digital forms of the same medium such as photography. Keightley and Pickering (2014, 579) actually argue that some of the motivations and social uses of analogue technologies still persist in their digital counterparts and that there are also continuities despite the changes of technologies. In regard to materiality, van Dijck (2007, 47) warns of assuming that with digitization, media technologies of and for remembering become immaterial. In her view, the materiality and the durability of media changes but does not vanish completely. The same holds true for the possibilities of manipulation that have existed even in pre-digital times although the variety of manipulation options has grown today. The more intriguing shift, van Dijck (2007, 48) notices in the course of digitization, is a transcendence of what she calls "personal cultural memory" towards a broader public realm. Although "personal cultural memory" has always been constructed against the background of public memories and the distinction can only be made for analytical reasons, certain media technologies for remembering such as photography used to be in analogue times largely constrained to the private and domestic domain. Nowadays, with a strong desire to share experience as a social practice, new technologies such as cameras in smartphones enable individuals to share lived experiences at a larger scale. Van Dijck (2007, 48) therefore diagnoses a shift from photographing as keeping experiences to sharing experiences with others in social interaction, meaning a shift from archiving

practices towards practices of social communication. She understands this shift as happening with other socio-cultural changes such as individualization.

Networked communication technologies thus allow for a construction of collective memory on the basis of a broader range of knowledge enabled through different kinds of media technologies. In this vein, van Dijck (2007, 113) also argues that the individual has become more important than the family. In this line of thought, the reconfiguration of practices would materialize first, in a greater variety and complexity of mnemonic practices and second, in more individualized forms of collective remembering. Yet, it remains open to debate whether the reconfiguration of practices actually is led by the changes in technology or the social uses of these technologies and what that actually means for the underlying motivations of memory practices? De Groot (2009, 94) for example claims that the emergence of online search engines affected how people search and appropriate historical knowledge. Pieter H. Smit (2018, 27) in his dissertation on "platforms of memory" further argues that agency is not exclusively "reserved to humans", but that e.g. technologies and objects engage in memory work in their own right.

Either way, we can conclude that media change encouraged and conditioned a wider range of mnemonic practices that people apply with and through (new) media technologies. Prior theorizations suggested that the increased complexity of collective memory that e.g. shows in a even greater plurality of practices, more individualized needs and interests and a greater variety of mnemonic agents brings about an even greater need for negotiating the norms of remembering in a social group or society as a whole.

This subchapter identified four key areas and sets of theoretical approaches to memory research in communication and media studies. Despite these theoretical advancements on collective memory in communication and media studies, a few aspects deserve more attention and further exploration, particularly against the backdrop of this dissertation. (1) First, most of the theorizations of the discipline is overly occupied with media technology and neglect the role of direct interpersonal communication and the immediated and intimate social contacts with family members or peers. Media socialization theories do stress that these social groups and contexts are still primary agents for socialization and thus normative instances in people's everyday lives and thus also collective remembering within these social contexts. Angela Keppler's (1994) work on dinner table talks of families was groundbreaking in this regard, but little follow-up research was conducted. One reason for this marginalization is the holding on to a conceptualization of media (van Dijck 2007; Garde-Hansen 2011) instead of communication in a wider sense (e.g. Knoblauch 1999).

(2) A second aspect is to broaden theoretical efforts with regard to varying socio-cultural and -political contexts. The complexities of collective memory and media changes may play out differently beyond Western democratic societies. Particularly in authoritarian, conflict-ridden, post-communist or late-communist countries power structures may be more resilient in order to secure regimes and overcome divisions within society. What are the values and norms negotiated in the memory and communication practices within societies beyond the Western realm? And how much space for negotiations is actually possible in societies that are economically and socially changing quickly, but politically hold on to authoritarian structures? Media and anthropological scholars alike (van Dijck 2007; Erll 2017) have already pointed out the cultural sensitivity and normativity of collective memory, but what can we learn from societies other than our own that add to existing theorizations?

In reviewing an array of existing memory theories in social sciences and the humanities, this chapter expressed the need for a multi-layered, but specified conceptualization of communicating memories. The chapter further identified premises that serve to theorize the social phenomenon of interest. In conclusion of this theoretical subchapter, I summarize the clarification of the main theoretical terms as follows: From a communications perspective in the tradition of symbolic interactionism (Mead 2008; Krotz 2001), collective memory can be understood as a complex, vague, fluid and theoretical construct of an infinite number of existing symbolic representations, texts and objects that carry mnemonic meaning. These symbolic objects, texts and representations of collective memory do not necessarily bear meaning in their own right, but their meaning is assigned by people and brought into being through their practices.

"Communicating memories" therefore conceptualizes more specifically how individuals (PRE4) select, negotiate and assign mnemonic meanings to such symbolic representations, texts and objects (PRE8) in communicative acts (PRE2) of appropriation. The involved and entangled communicative forms and practices (social interactions) (PRE1-3) are not necessarily coincidental but aim at certain social purposes including identity formation and social integration that can be more or less conscious and more or less intentional (PRE9); they rely on available communicative means (PRE7) and adhere to prevailing communicative norms (PRE5) as well as prior knowledge and norms learned during the process of socialization (PRE6). These nine premises narrow down "communicating memories" as social phenomenon conceptually for further research (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Premises of communicating memories

### 2.3 Communicating memories in the everyday: A repertoire approach to mnemonic communication

In the previous review of theoretical strands of memory research, I determined nine premises (PRE1-9) in order to develop a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of "communicating memories" as a social phenomenon and the research subject of this dissertation. The following chapter further advances the argument that mundane ways of engaging with collective pasts can be conceptually understood and empirically researched as processes of communicative appropriation that involve particular uses of communicative forms and practices for particular social purposes in varying social contexts of the everyday. In the context of Vietnam, such an approach is necessary in order to examine which forms and practices of mnemonic communication are actually relevant to people's social lifeworlds because or despite of the ubiquitous state representations of the past. In order to assess how Vietnamese urbanites communicate collective memories in the everyday, the chapter draws from media repertoire research (Hasebrink 2015; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012) and suggests an analytical heuristic of mnemonic communication repertoires (MCRs).

"Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world." (Berger/Luckmann 1967, 19) The everyday is "the primary sphere" for human beings to experience this reality (Lingenberg 2015, 110) of their lifeworlds, which is maintained by their thoughts, actions and "subjectively meaningful conduct" (Berger/Luckmann 1967, 19-20). The everyday perspective in social science accounts for the individuality and the heterogeneity of practices in daily life by examining the "subjectively meaningful" on the one hand, but also deals with the question of how the same daily practices (re-)produce social structures and social order in postmodern societies on the other hand (Göttlich 2015, 118). An everyday research perspective for investigating "communicating memories" therefore concentrates on those mnemonic practices that are

meaningful to a particular person and their social contexts as only those are constitutive of their lifeworlds (Volkmer 2006c, 13). Engaging with the past through communicative practice and sense-making in the everyday thus includes a particular reflexive mode of constituting and understanding one's own social reality. Among memory scholars, John Bodnar (1992) coined the term "vernacular memory" that comes close to the everyday understanding of communicating memories. According to Bodnar (1992, 14), vernacular memory relies on "firsthand experience in small-scale communities" and "convey[s] what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like." In his line of thought, "public memory" emanates from the interaction of elitist official and personalized ordinary vernacular memory (ibid., 13-15). Michael Rothberg's (2009) theory of "multidirectional memory" similarly emphasizes this interactive nature of collective memories, advancing the argument that mnemonic accounts are not always purely competitive or a "zero-sum game" (ibid., xiii). Instead they represent subjects of "negotiation, cross-referencing and borrowing" (ibid., 3).

In cultural studies, everyday practices are usually conceptualized as either reproducing the common, habits and routines or as practices that contest the popular (Göttlich 2015, 121) and hegemonic. Both perspectives address the questions of power and individual agency that have been prominent in practice-oriented approaches to memory (e.g. Ryan 2010). The different ways of positioning towards hegemonic representations in communicating memories is rooted in people's social status and experiences. It is therefore not an exclusively individual or private endeavour (Hipfl 2010, 90). Examining mnemonic communication in urban Vietnam therefore does not only aim at discussing single practices of individuals, but also at revealing the social patterns and structures that lie underneath them and reflect characteristics Vietnamese urban society.

In media and communications, the everyday perspective has largely been approached and developed further by focusing on domestication and appropriation of media (Pink/Leder Mackley 2013, 680) as well as media socialization (Mikos 2010, 35). Inspired by anthropologist Hermann Bausinger (1984), Roger Silverstone, Lesley Haddon, Eric Hirsch and David Morley investigated how people integrate new media technologies into their daily lives and make sense of them by developing the domestication approach (Haddon/Silverstone 1993; Silverstone/Hirsch 1992; Morley 1986, 1992). They regarded everyday (media) practices as embedded and navigated in a network of social relations (Röser 2007, 15-17) that are also key in media socialization approaches (Vollbrecht/Wegener 2010, 9). These processes of integrating and meaning-making of

media technologies and content by people within the web of their social relations and on their own willful account (de Certau 1984) are usually understood as "media appropriation" (Lingenberg 2015, 109). In this sense, everyday practices equal practices of appropriating media content and technologies that acknowledge individuals' emancipatory agency in communicating (Lingenberg 2015, 110).

The appropriation approach on (media) communication that is devoted to individuals' agency theoretically acknowledges and responds to the earlier mentioned symbolic ambiguity of media content and communication (PRE8) in turning the attention towards the variety of practices and subjective sense-making. The appropriation concept thus helps us to understand to which communicated content, media technology or object, people actually assign mnemonic meaning, which is hard to grasp or often pre-defined as "mnemonic" by researchers. Sabina Mihelj (2017, 240-241) has illustrated that point with regard to nostalgia research.

Such sensitivity to the polysemic character of nostalgia may also mean accepting that practices, beliefs or objects that we initially recognise as nostalgic are not understood as such by people who engage with them. (Mihelj 2017, 240-241)

The same argument can be applied mnemonic communication at a more general level and therefore presses the need for memory research that centers on people's practices and meaning-making. While a given history documentary may "objectively" present a media text and representation of collective memory, it remains irrelevant unless it is not brought into communicative practice by people engaging with and assigned meaning to it. Propagandistic historical and commemorative content in Vietnam, for example, is widely disseminated and prominently placed in public. In the upcoming days of historical anniversaries, propaganda billboards and posters line alongside the main roads and traffic hubs of urban centers. But how do inhabitants of the cities respond to these symbolic representations of the past and what role do they play in their everyday lives?

The idea of "communicating memories" focuses on individual agency in collective remembering within the constraints of their social contexts and roles. Brigitte Hipfl (2010, 86) notes that "people make their own history, but they do not do it of their free will." (ibid.) Referring to Hall (1999), Hipfl (2010, 86) states that people's agency and practices are conditioned and also constrained by people's social backgrounds and the social norms they perceive as common sense. How urbanites in Vietnam interpret posters on commemorative events to stick with the example is then also a question of their socialization and what has been taught to be normative standards. While people and families have their own histories and construct their own collective memories these also

interact within broader power dynamics in which the CPV controls the teaching, writing and interpretation of history, public commemorations and celebrations of historical figures and past events. How "communicating memories" in everyday urban Vietnam works against social backgrounds and within these power structures under an authoritarian regime is essential to this dissertation.

The everyday perspective in media research often advocates non-media centric approaches (Morley 2007, 200; Pink/Leder Mackley 2013, 677) that are sensitive to the entanglement of different types of communication and their social contexts (Mikos 2010, 28). Lothar Mikos (2010, 38) argues for example that communicative structures in families and among peers affect the appropriation of media technologies and content. Such forms of social group interaction and communication have been particularly stressed in sociological works on memory reviewed previously (e.g. Halbwachs 2008, Olick/Robbins 1998, Leonhard 2002). The everyday perspective therefore helps to meet the previous criticism of media studies' strong focus on "mediated memories" and neglect of interpersonal communication included in the idea of "communicating memories". Despite the integration of interpersonal communication, the everyday framework allows to investigate further how various media practices are interlinked in what Bausinger (1984, 349) called "media ensembles" instead of focusing on one single media technology and memory. Such a perspective may also reveal insights in what ways some mnemonic communication practices may be more meaningful than others in the daily lives of people. Instead of just focusing on Vietnamese television drama and its nostalgic elements (Nguyen-Thu 2019) as one particular genre, the everyday framework in this sense takes a broader angle. While television drama is generally a popular genre, the focus on medium and genre first, speaks only to particular audiences of these shows and second, cannot show how the engagement with these TV series relate to other media preferences or further social communication. Examining media ensembles instead can reveal how people engage with various mediated or communicated forms of memory and how they relate to one another.

Besides media domestication and socialization approaches, the plurality, entanglement and differentiation of communicative forms and practices have been subject to broader theorizations of media change such as "mediatization" (Krotz 2001; Lundby 2014; Couldry/Hepp 2017; Hepp 2020). With "mediatization", Krotz (2001, 22) described a stronger pervasion of everyday life with media that come with timely, spatial, social and situational blurring of boundaries in daily communication. This blurring of boundaries are the results of what Hoskin's (2018, 5) diagnosed as "hyperconnectivity" in the memory

context. Such delimitations do not only stand for further differentiation of forms of communication, but also that different ways of communicating can take place simultaneously (Krotz 2001, 24-25). Media technologies fuse and so do once separated media spaces of personal and daily practices (ibid., 21). Morley (2007, 207) for example discussed the delimitation of the work and the domestic sphere with media technologies enabling new models of working at home. The phenomenon of a growing pervasiveness of media technologies in everyday life brought about several conceptualizations in order to grasp the nature of changing media spheres. Such notions include popular academic expressions and concepts such as "media-saturated world" (Ang 1996, 72), "new 'mediascape'" (Alasutaari 1999, 17), "converging media environments" (Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012), "media manifold" (Couldry 2016), "polymedia" (Madianou/Miller 2012), "the mediation of everything" (Livingstone 2009) or "mediatized worlds" (Hepp/Krotz 2014). While I cannot discuss all of them at length here and despite their conceptual differences, they all share common ground with regard to the plurality, differentiation and complexity of media communication in everyday lives that is also reflected in the phenomenon of "communicating memories".

In the field of audience studies, the urge for a more encompassing look at everyday media use was partly tackled through a shift towards an understanding of "media as practices" (Couldry 2016, 26) — a turn that we have also seen in media studies' memory research (see practice-oriented approaches). Krotz (2001, 26) argued that the development of media technologies provide a variety of potentials, but it depends on the people of how they make use of these potentials and integrate them into their daily routines. If media are regarded as creating potentials, their use and the meaning of these uses only unfold in cultural and social practices of people. This line of thought ties in with van Dijck's (2007) understanding of the social uses of media technologies for collective remembering within particular socio-cultural contexts. Despite socio-cultural norms and individual agency, the potentials of using media technologies also depend on their materialistic nature to some extent. Different from the majority of media and memory theorists, Krotz' (2001, 2007) conceptual works always kept interpersonal communication — non-mediated or mediated — in the picture. The blending and interrelation of interpersonal and media communication remained a relevant part of investigating media change (Krotz 2001, 49).

Another approach that tried to tackle the challenge of assessing converging media and communication environments conceptually and empirically is the repertoire approach (Hasebrink/Popp 2006; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012; Hasebrink 2015). The concept of so-

called "media repertoires" refers to "how media users combine different media contacts into a comprehensive pattern of exposure" (Hasebrink/Popp 2006, 369) in a media environment with ever more growing options. Tying in with previous theorizations of media use such as the uses and gratifications approach (Katz et al. 1974; Palmgreen 1983), mood management (Zillmann 2000) and social milieus (Weiß 2009), it analyzes how people select particular media content or technologies and make sense of their own interrelated media practices of use (Hasebrink/Popp 2006, 371-374; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012; Hasebrink/Hepp 2016, 4-9). The repertoire approach thus centers its focus on individuals and their communicative practices in converging media environments. It faces the challenges caused by the often pronounced blurred boundaries between single media types and genres, between mass and individual communication (Hasebrink 2015, 3-4). In media research before digitization, reading the daily news would have clearly been classified as using a newspaper. In times of mediatization and consequently the greater omnipresence and differentiation of media (Krotz 2001, 19; Hasebrink/Hepp 2016, 9), however, it remains uncertain whether the news were read on a website, using an e-paper on a tablet or using a news app on the smartphone. These circumstances challenged current research on media use and substantiate the need for a cross-media approach within communication and media studies (Hasebrink 2015, 4). The repertoire is based on three principles of analysis: 1) user-centered perspective 2) entirety 3) relationality (Hasebrink/Hepp 2016, 8). Early conceptualizations of the repertoire approach focused on selective choices, motivations and uses of media communication only (Hasebrink/Popp 2006; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012). Applying the repertoire approach in the context of memory research, however, Finger and Wagner (2014, 341) pointed out the significance of what they called "non-media repertoires" that include e.g. family conversations or visits to commemorative places.

In recent years, Hasebrink (2015) extended the conceptualization of "media repertoires" towards a broader approach of "communication repertoires", integrating interpersonal communication in its mediated and non-mediated forms. Communication repertoires therefore describe "all mediated and non-mediated communicative practices of an individual, which serve to relate oneself to others and the world" (ibid., 4). In this regard, the repertoire approach faces the criticism of the neglect of interpersonal communication in communication research generally and in media and memory research in particular. The concept further assumes that communicative practices evolve from given options, schemes and skills of action and patterns of repertoires consolidate in particular life stages in relation to particular reference persons or peer groups (ibid., 5). In this regard, the concept

of communication repertoires integrates socialization perspectives. Comparing the repertoire-oriented approach to the phenomenon of "communicating memories" up to this point, it becomes apparent that it corresponds to several of the pre-defined premises such as the focus on social and communicative practices (PRE1-2) and their entanglements by its entirety approach (PRE3) as applied by individuals (PRE4) within a process of socialization (PRE6). Hasebrink's (2015, 5) further stressed the need for contextualizing these practices. The underlying assumption is that the entirety of these communicative practices of an individual forms into a stable pattern of communicative reference to various persons or groups that are part of his or her social context. In this sense, Hasebrink (2015, 5) further noted that the selection (PRE5) and pattern of these communicative practices are also part of people's "identity management" (ibid.) that also reveal expectations towards media or communication in particular social contexts. Conceptually, the repertoire approach therefore also allows for reconstructing social relations and contexts of people with others and media. The broad and open conceptualization of the repertoire approach accounts for many possible contextual factors that condition and explain individual's selective communicative practices and the meaning they assign to them and the communicated content. Such an explorative approach meets previous demands of media anthropologists (Bird 2011; Ang 1996) and domestication researchers (Röser 2007). The approach has been applied in the context of everyday routines, but also with regard to the appropriation of historical knowledge as a long-term process (Finger/Wagner 2014). The repertoire therefore does not necessarily need to be seen as a snapshot at a particular point in time, but it can also be regarded diachronically, as a repertoire that has formed, changed and sedimented over time on the basis of prior experience (PRE6) to its current pattern. It is this diachronic perspective and the sensitivity to social contexts that makes the repertoire approach particularly useful for memory research as it allows to assess how people have engaged with "the past" over time in various ways. Its focus on the individual's subjective sense-making also respects how people perceive meaning of their own actions or of media texts or conversations in interdependence with their contextual circumstances. It thus embraces the idea of appropriation, although not explicating questions of power in detail. Yet, the repertoire approach widely prevents the risk of an interpretative gap between researcher and subject that Mihelj (2017) addressed in clarifying what is actually nostalgic. Irena Reifova and colleagues (2013, 200) already noted that

[...] collective memory consists of a wide repertoire of practices and discourses whose variants may be conducive to different results of remembering and forgetting. (Reifova et al. 2013, 200)

The repertoire approach therefore helps to identify and focus on those mnemonic practices and content that are actually relevant for people's own lifeworlds. That is a particularly pressing need in the research of societies under authoritarian regimes such as in Vietnam, where the population is too easily regarded as propagandistically indoctrinated, passive or non-political audiences, indirectly assuming that agency and "interpretative autonomy" of media users require a liberal and democratic media environment (Reifova 2015, 80). It thus allows for an open and less biased approach that is particularly important in a culturally different research context than the researcher's own (Lohmeier 2018; Richter 2016).

Meeting the premises that outline the phenomenon of "communicating memories", the repertoire approach provides a conceptual framework as well as the empirical tools to grasp what "communicating memories" in the everyday is actually about and relieve it from its abstract character. The repertoire approach further provides the space for individual's to define what they themselves define as meaningful knowledge of or about "the past", how they negotiate various interpretations of representations of considered collective pasts and what topics, texts, objects actually carry mnemonic meaning to them. "Communicating memories" in this sense covers a particular repertoire of mnemonic forms and practices of communication that lies at the intersection of the general communication repertoire and a general memory repertoire that includes all possible ways of engaging with the past by an individual at particular points in time (Fig. 2). Yet, it is hard to draw a clear-cut line of this intersection as it largely depends on one's definition of (media) communication and media objects.

Drawing from Krotz's (2001, 48) notion of communication, "communicating memories" as an intersection does include only those forms of communication that are social interactions between human beings or media as media technologies and those who apply them. That excludes the engagement with memory objects that are not media products in a narrower sense such as Vietnam War remnants (Schwenkel 2013) or personal objects such as clothing or jewellery that would be comprised in the general memory repertoire. Photographs as personal objects but also media products on the other hand are at the crossection of communication and memory repertoire. The engagement with them thus belongs to a mnemonic communication repertoire and therefore presents a way of "communicating memories". Prime sensory encounters such as smell and taste as in Marcel Proust's (1992, 60-65) often referenced "madeleine" episode of a French pastry's smell evoking memories would classify as part of a general memory repertoire as the action of smelling and its triggering of neuro-scientific and psychological processes do not classify as

social action. Moreover, there is no everyday media technology as such that could mediate these sensory experiences. While memory-envoking food as such does not qualify as mnemonic communication in the context of this dissertation communicative interactions referring to past times while eating or mediated representations of food that provoke references to past times or traditions do so. Communicative actions in this research are either verbalized, auditive and/or visualized signs articulated by human beings or through media technologies.

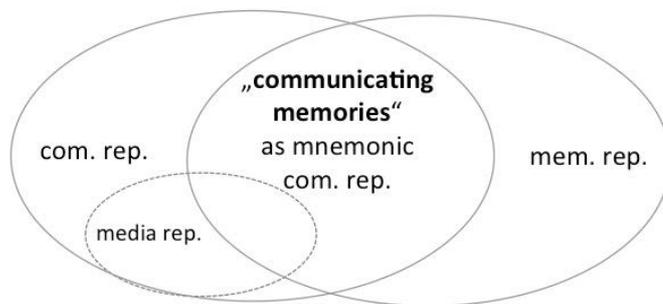


Fig. 2: Repertoire approach to communicating memories: Mnemonic communication repertoires (MCRs)

In sum, applying a repertoire-oriented perspective to the subject of this research, namely communicating memories in Vietnam, addresses the central questions of "how do Vietnamese urbanites communicate collective memories in the everyday by means of media technologies and in relation to others?" (RQ1) and "how do they make sense of it?" (RQ2). The repertoire approach serves to grasp how urbanites from a growing Vietnamese middle class navigate their media and social relations in a society that experienced drastic changes over the last century. According to the repertoire-perspective the research interest in communicating memories in Vietnam is fourfold: (1) Which mnemonic forms and practices of communication do people utilize in the everyday that form their repertoire? (RQ1.1) (2) What are the motivations that drive and norms that regulate communicative practices of remembering (RQ1.2) and (3) how do Vietnamese of different generations make sense of their interrelated practices? (RQ1.3) (4) What meaning do these entangled practices imply for people's social lifeworlds? (RQ2) While the entanglement of practices is a result of media change as reviewed previously, media change in Vietnam is not the core subject of this dissertation but rather serves as contextual knowledge on people's media socialization and available potentials for collective remembering in different time periods. Utilizing a repertoire approach and an appropriation perspective, the dissertation will not only scrutinize people's agency and self-determinism of their practices but also critically

reviews social constraints and power dynamics that play into these practices. Taking into account power relations as context is particularly pressing in societies ruled by authoritarian regimes such as Vietnam, where public communication is strongly regulated by the CPV and its state apparatus.

The next chapter reviews a selection of empirical research on memory in media and communication studies. It addresses specifically those studies that broadly fit into the paradigm of communicative appropriation. They provide the basis for further exploring the social phenomenon of communicating memories empirically.

### **3 Literature review: Empirical memory research in media and communications**

Having discussed the theoretical framework for investigating communicating memories in Vietnam, the following chapter presents, reviews and discusses empirical studies that have examined relations of communication and memory from user-, appropriation- and practice-oriented research perspective at the micro and meso-levels of analysis. It focuses on studies that investigated and classified individuals' or social groups' various communicative practices of remembering, including their characteristics and norms. The chapter thereby contributes to resolve the academic need for systemizing empirical findings of largely scattered case studies in the field.

The systematic overview follows in its broader outline Krotz' (2007a, 90-92) classification of forms of communication. It first discusses mnemonic forms and practices of interpersonal (mediated) communication and standardized communication classification before turning to conflating cross-media perspectives according to everyday and repertoire-oriented approaches. The chapter classifies which forms and practices of mnemonic communication exist; what people's motivations and preferences are in applying these practices; and how they make sense of them and equip them with relevance in their particular social and media environments. The literature review further includes generational perspectives on mnemonic communication in order to gain insights on how different age groups deal with mnemonic communication. In a final subchapter, the literature review zooms in on media memory studies that particularly concern late- and post-socialist societies and thus societies that lived in and received sociopolitical education

within similar ideological contexts and underwent major transformations since the late 1980s.

### **3.1 Memory studies in interpersonal communication, audience and reception research**

#### **3.1.1 Remembering in interpersonal communication research**

In the niche of memory research in communication and media studies, only few communication researchers paid actual attention to direct face-to-face communication as one communicative mode of collective remembering. This neglect has left gaps e.g. on the role of intimate non-mediated social relations in remembering, of public memory as a topic and construct of interpersonal debates or of time witnesses as conversation partners, socialization and mnemonic agents. Exceptions addressing this gap in communications are Angela Keppler's (1994) work on table talks, Michael Meyen's (2013) research on communicative memories of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Sabina Mihelj's (2013) "Iron Curtain"-study that I will discuss here alongside a selection of other sociological and psychological studies. Interpersonal communication is further touched upon in the area of visual communication, particular in regard to personal photography. Interest in interpersonal communication eventually sparked once it became further mediatized and technologically mediated with the advent of online media and SNS. Mediated interpersonal communication on social online platforms has now become one of the major fields of contribution in communication's empirical memory research.

Prior research on interpersonal communication first and foremost concentrates on family communication and everyday contexts of the domestic sphere. This strand of research particularly examines the meaning of mnemonic communication practices for the family as a social community, the norms of collective remembering within the familial group, media content as subject of family conversations as well as ways of perpetuating collective memories. In the following, I carve out and summarize previously researched communicative forms and practices, their characteristics and social functions.

Keppler's (1994, 2001) work focuses on how communicative practices of collective remembering constitute "family" as a social entity. She argued that

Without a continuous practice of remembering their own past, families could not secure a reliable form of their own existence. These procedures of communicative remembering take place as acts of self-thematization of the family as a family. (Keppler 2001, 138)

Keppler (1994, 2001) described remembering as a self-referential and reconstructive communicative practice that deals with the past of the family as a social group or community. By the same token, Fivush et al. (2019, 20-21) argued family is (re-)constituted "through storytelling" in which every family member takes part in everyday family interaction and talks. Keppler (1994, 168; 2001, 146-148) discerned two main forms of mnemonic communication within family conversations: first, incidental communicative constructions of the past in the course of familial rituals and second, deliberate remembering during organized family events. Communicative constructions occur spontaneously during, after or between family meals. They serve to clarify a point in a debate or to educate (ibid. 1994, 56). This form is a more random reminder of a family's collective past than the second one. Other research on mnemonic family talks indicates that any family member can prompt such incidental references to the past (Welzer et al. 2002, 19). That includes also family members who did not experience certain time periods. These references do not need to contain news, but also occur when everyone knows the story already (ibid.). The second form of remembering, memories as planned element of family events, explicitly aims at reviving and more thoroughly interpreting past times. Such social events of family remembrance include for example conversations at family gatherings when people present and discuss family photographs (Keppler 2001, 146-148). Independent of the communicative form, Keppler's (2001, 156) researched family histories were rarely told in a linear and coherent way and thus did not evolve into a whole coherent story line particularly during table talks. Welzer et al. (2002, 19-20) described such rather loose narrative elements as biographic episodes that seem typical for conversational remembering. Individual family members can also be interpret these episodes differently. Family histories can thus rather be understood as a synthesized construction of accepted interpretations of past experiences and events instead of one coherent story (ibid., 20). On this account, Keppler (2001) assumed that family memory does not primarily rely on sharing a common story and knowledge about the past but rather on common occasions and the agreement on common practices of remembering. The priority lies here on the repeated ritualized practices instead of the actual content of family memory (Keppler 2001, 141). This ritualized nature combined with the intimacy and immediacy of engaging in storytelling (re-)establishes social and affective bonds. According to Fivush et al. (2019, 22) such affective bonds cannot be created in the same way through appropriating mediated family records or consulting genealogical or historical archives.

The previous studies also touch upon the normativity of collective remembering in order to secure a common identity and cohesion of the group as community. One such norm is the knowledge and agreement about a shared repertoire of communicative options among family members because these formal preconditions give orientation to exchange and negotiate interests in conversations (Keppler 2001, 141). Besides the common repertoire, the repetition and ritualization of communicative forms, topics and practices on specific occasions such as birthdays or holidays are key for establishing family traditions and forging a common identity (ibid. 1994, 27-29). Ritualized remembering in this sense can be described as acts of "reconstructive self-assurance" (ibid. 30). Family rituals further are related to social and behavioral conventions, e.g. in the relationship between parents and their children (ibid., 29). Such conventions can also include rules about which knowledge stays exclusively with the nuclear family as "family secrets" (Fivush et al. 2019, 23) or which knowledge is shared more widely.

How such social conventions play into the articulation and perpetuation of memories within the family context showed Welzer and colleagues' (2002) study on Holocaust remembrance. They found that a felt obligation for loyalty among family members (ibid., 200) led to a tendency in younger generations to frame parents and grandparents as heroes of resistance although the stories these family members told them did not imply it (ibid., 16). Obviously, the social norm of loyalty among family members resulted in a harmonization of family stories with hegemonic public discourses on Germans as victims of the Nazi regime. The interpretation of family histories thus was reconciled with conventions of national narratives and socially dominant versions of collective memory (ibid.).

In the context of reconciling socialist pasts, Mihelj (2013, 64) similarly observed that people navigate their conversational and vernacular memories within "broader political, social and historical context[s]" and the normative conventions these entail. Personal experience usually served to legitimize positive, moderate or critical views on socialist times (ibid., 69). Recent research on conversational remembering in post-socialist societies, also stresses the importance of kinship in negotiating family memories within such broader contexts (Nugin 2019). Strategies of distancing, rejecting and complementing occurred commonly in cases of conflicting versions of the Soviet past in Estonia and also depended on ethnic backgrounds, migration histories and thus socialization within families (ibid. 6-7). Particularly, in cases of being confronted with various versions of the past, mnemonic practices do not only include negotiating narratives but also norms about what is

appropriate to be said in which context (Mihelj 2013, 72). Strategies of harmonizing and/or rejecting particular interpretations and narratives of the past in family conversations can show how social taboos are reflected in everyday conversational and familial practices, particularly in memories of National-Socialist pasts (Welzer et al. 2002; Leonhard 2002; Jensen 2004; Krogsgaard 2017).

The negotiation process of biographic experience, family histories and public memory can also articulate in nostalgic and contesting comments on hegemonic interpretations of the past. In his research on the cultural and communicative memories of the GDR, Meyen (2013, 218-219) identified a group of "OstalgiKER"<sup>3</sup> who were mainly positive about the GDR past. They were proud of their origins and concentrated more on everyday life instead of politics in their narrative (ibid.). While their communicative mode of nostalgia might be a coping strategy (Menke 2017) with sociopolitical changes and a different socialization, the de-politicization of the narrative also can be seen as a strategy to prevent major clashes with dominant views of the GDR as a lawless, unjust state in the discussion with others. Family conversations or memories were not a research subject in Meyen's (2013) work that scrutinized mainly people's responses to public narratives about the GDR. It therefore remains open whether these nostalgic views also derive from family contexts.

Nina Leonhard (2002, 291-297) pointed out the crucial role of elderly family members in establishing such social conventions in collective remembering for younger family members during the process of socialization. In her dissertation on historical consciousness about Nazi Germany in East and West German families, Leonhard (2002, 295) noted that the family serves as a "filter" because elder family members who possess direct lived experiences with or other prior knowledge about a certain time period provide an interpretational frame about the past through their own interpretations, exclusions, etc. even before younger family members receive school education about that time period. Leonhard (ibid.) and Welzer et al. (2002, 13-15) argue that other versions of the past are appropriated in relation to this familial interpretational frame. According to Leonhard's (2002) research, the processes of later appropriation can either serve familial cohesion or individual delineation from the family. In this sense, she attributes much authoritative power to parents and elder family members as mnemonic agents due to their role as socialization actors and reference persons when growing up. The "filter" is again subject to

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<sup>3</sup> A colloquial German term that is a linguistic blending of the words "East" and "nostalgic" used to describe former GDR citizens and their descendents who hold positive and romanticized views about life and culture in the GDR. It has also become a phenomenon in consumer and vintage culture in Germany.

the elderly's own normative and value orientations, which also articulate in particular "perpetuation agendas" of collective memories and particular styles of education within the family (Leonhard 2002, 291). In her view, this filtered perspective can instead of a harmonization lead also to a separation of family history on the one hand and national political history on the Third Reich on the other hand for the same time period (ibid., 296). All the previously discussed studies suggest that the intimacy and affective relations toward other family members represent a moral stronghold and orientation in familial remembering (Leonhard 2002, 297; Welzer et al. 2002, 196; Keppler 1994, 205-206).

Most of these previously discussed studies that mainly focused on collective remembering in familial conversations yet, do acknowledge the role of media in the everyday appropriation of family and national history to some extent. They suggest an interdependence of face-to-face (family) communication and mass-mediated communication. Personal stories told among family members provide frames of how historical knowledge is appropriated (Leonhard 2002, 295; Welzer et al. 2002, 13) and mass-media representations of history on the other hand serve as gap-fillers and illustrations to imagine and appropriate family histories (Welzer et al. 2002, 199).

Moreover, personal photographs, slides or home video as products of vernacular memory of the family can become integral part and subject of conversations and common interpretations of the past during family events (Keppler 1994, 186). These amateur media products inspired another strand of research concerned with (mediated) interpersonal communication and media products as memory objects, mainly personal photography. In empirical research, Pickering and Keightley (2015, 1) found that photography, besides music, was one of the most significant technologies in people's everyday practices of remembering. They discerned four basic types of everyday photographic uses: photo-taking, -viewing, -storing and -sharing (Keightley/Pickering 2014). Photographs serve as record and evidence for the existence of the family (Kuhn 2002, 49). Often family photographs represent snapshots of family life or significant events such as family vacations or festivities (Keppler 1994, 186; Pickering/Keightley 2015, 2). They are visual "forms of self documentation and self objectivation of family life" that gain their relevance and mnemonic meaning also through ritualized family communication about and "collective interpretation" of them (Keppler 1994, 187-188). Photographs thus serve as occasion and cue for narratives (Erll 2011, 160) and are immediately connected with practices of face-to-face communication. In a similar vein, Marianne Hirsch (2012, xii)

noted in her work on "postmemory" that narrative acts surrounding family photographs are essential for the transmission of memories and connecting generations.

With the Internet and Web 2.0 entering family households, research interest in examining online practices of collective remembering and thus mediated interpersonal communication in the family extended beyond the domestic sphere of a place-bound home. Holloway and Green (2017) empirically investigated memory practices related to family photographs and albums on Facebook. Applying a domestication approach, the authors indicated that mnemonic acts of taking, posting, curating and sharing family photographs on SNS usually coincide with particular life stages such as new parenthood (*ibid.*, 359). A difference in comparison to analogue photographs is the "variety of screens" through which family pictures are made available and can be engaged with depending on mobility, devices and contexts of use (*ibid.*, 361). From interviews with families, Holloway and Green (2017, 361-362) found that viewing and sharing of family photographs is often a daily routine to connect emotionally with absent family members while posting is usually confined to special familial events meaningful to the group. It is further important to note that these mnemonic communication practices surrounding family photo albums on Facebook are always accompanied by familial processes of negotiating the "appropriate" use of online media and thus the familial norms of collective remembering (*ibid.*, 362). In their comparison of analogue and digital photography as memory technologies, Keightley and Pickering (2014, 582-583) yet emphasized the continuities of conventions of social uses of photography, for example regarding the captured visual motives or the felt need to preserve them over extended periods of time.

While the birth of a new family member and new life stages such as marriage or parenthood have been regarded as positive biographic drivers for personal or familial memory work (Garde-Hansen 2009; van Dijck 2007), the loss of a loved one and related mourning and commemoration practices represent another strand of empirical memory research in communications from an everyday perspective. Studies looked at how people use social media platforms in order to communicate with and about the deceased as part of their grieving process (de Groot 2009; Carroll/Landry 2010; Offerhaus 2016; Martel 2017). In Myles and Millerand's (2016) ethnography on a mourning Facebook page it is noteworthy that most online mourning practices were public wall posts, affective expressions and applied mostly by family members, friends and colleagues and mainly addressed to the deceased instead of other mourners. Despite the public appearance and accessibility of the page, explicit mourning practices in this case study are yet strongly

linked to degree of closeness and common experience with the deceased. The authors remind us that despite the various forms of mourning that Facebook offers such as wish cards, prayer spaces and diary posts, these online practices yet draw from pre-existing norms and conventions of mourning such as keeping personal traces in the form of photographs of and with the deceased (ibid., 239).

While the previous case studies usually illustrated the centrality of personal relationships in online commemorative practices, the rise in popularity of SNS in everyday lives of people also broadened the possible scope of research from looking at collective remembering of social groups with "thick" and "thin" relations (Margalit 2002, 8), meaning with more and less personal ties. To stick with the mourning context, Thimm and Nehls (2017, 346) for example argued that the social taboo of communicating about death drives young German mourners on Instagram to self-select and engage with more anonymous "mini-publics" via hashtags in order to cope with their grief beyond intimate family circles. In a similar sense, Offerhaus (2016, 54) described such social formations of mourners online, e.g. on virtual cemeteries, as "temporal communities of fate and shared experience".

A further strand of empirical studies thus looks at particular online groups that formed on the grounds of a common mnemonic cause and that qualify as particular mnemonic groups. Empirical studies on mnemonic online groups usually focus on people's practices within the specific group, topics of discourses, power relations and the socio-technical affordances of the technology used. Such empirical research is widely dispersed in case studies on diverse group contexts such as nostalgic online groups (Kaun/Stiernstedt 2014, 2016; Kalinina/Menke 2016), fan communities (Nansen et al. 2016; Garde-Hansen 2011), activist or (political) minority groups (Eastmond 2016; Nugin 2019; Gatta 2019; Merrill et al. 2020). Kalinina and Menke (2016, 68-69) noted that nostalgia is both, a driving sentiment of people for initially joining mnemonic online groups and a thematic subject of discursive practices of remembering. In their research on the use of a commemorative Facebook fan page on the GDR youth radio DT64, Kaun and Stiernstedt (2014, 1159) argued that the social media platform potentially can empower users to "produce cultural histories", but at the same time the technological affordances of Facebook constrain these potentials. The authors discovered through platform analysis and interviews that although users are encouraged by the page administrators to share and upload (preferably visual) materials and memorabilia in the sense of an archive, the actual visibility, collective experience, engagement and memory work of people with the page is reduced to primarily reading of content instead of actually publishing own original posts or connecting with other users

(*ibid.*, 1160-1164; 2016, 205). Their activities usually encompass the interaction with posts from the administrators through commenting, sharing and liking. In a follow-up paper, Kaun and Stiernstedt (2016, 199) differentiated between storing, representational and connective media memory practices.

In terms of power relations, the authors found that administrative posts on the fan page often aligned with already available and dominating "(n)ostalgic"<sup>4</sup> narratives. Through its prioritizing of visuals and brevity, Facebook presents few options for "alternative" stories to be told according to Kaun and Stiernstedt (*ibid.* 2014, 1164). The limitations of the researched social media platforms in Russia reached even further by preventing users from editing or deleting their posts or installing "partisan agents" as opinion leaders in respective online communities (Kalinina/Menke 2016, 68-71). Yet, to a limited extent discussions and negotiations of vernacular and official collective memories between users do take place on the Russian social media platforms that are also connected to and converged with Facebook. The perceived authenticity of a participant plays a role in whether dominant narratives are trusted or not (*ibid.*, 71). Kalinina and Menke (2016, 69) further found that nostalgic discursive practices often turned into discussions about societal values of people's experienced Soviet past, e.g. in communist youth organizations and the present. It is these value orientations connected to mnemonic discourses that forge identity-building. In other words, these practices of remembering resemble acts of orientation in changing societies. In a similar sense, Menke (2017) argued on the basis of a quantitative survey that media nostalgia is in fact a set of strategies coping with media change.

Further studies have researched mnemonic practices of people in relation to tragic or traumatic events such as natural disasters or political struggles that forged communal causes and the coping with loss. Farinosi and Micalizzi (2016) for example examined the local memory platform "Noi L'Aquila" that allowed citizens of that community to revisit the destroyed places of their city after a severe earthquake on a digital map and share their personal memories with other users of that website. They can also upload and share their own photographs, content and ideas of future reconstruction (*ibid.*, 98). Authors considered the practices of "storing, processing and sharing community memories" (*ibid.*, 90) as a form of dealing with experienced collective trauma of the community. The activity of users on the platform, however, ceased after a promotional campaign ended and thus was not widely adopted into everyday life practices of people (*ibid.*, 105-106). The dealing

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<sup>4</sup> Adjective derived from a linguistic blending of the words "nostalgic" and "east" used to describe former GDR citizens and their descendents' positive and romanticized sentiment about life and culture in the GDR.

with collective loss, trauma and mourning is particularly relevant in Vietnam's conflict- and war-ridden society of the last century.

What do we learn from this great variety of case studies and what can be taken away from them for further developing the idea of communicating memories? First, prominent types of mnemonic communication practices can be classified as capturing, storing organizing, presenting and sharing, recollecting (commemorating), consuming and negotiating memories through and in communication. Second, research on communicating memories within families as e.g. in family conversations, events, commemorations and mourning implied that certain life stages and biographic experience are important drivers of memory work. Third, kinship and the nature of intimate relations often affect how memories are interpreted or in conflicting cases are negotiated. In this sense, families are often regarded as prime socialization and mnemonic agents. Social ties, however, can be of varying intensity. A common fate, biographic experience or cause can initiate common bonds with an interest group where no social ties existed before, particularly through mediated mnemonic communication.

All case studies further implied that fourth, the main social function of communicating memories is social integration in the form of common identity-building and coping with change. Shared knowledge, interpretations and common practices enable individuals to forge common identities and to participate in social groups and society as a whole. The sense-making and application of this knowledge and practices in social groups always underlie certain value orientations that are usually learned in the process of socialization and in the interaction with social groups and institutions which brings us back to the centrality of kinship and social bonds. Communicating memories is thus subject to norms and result of socialization.

Socio-political or media change usually comes along with either changing value concepts as in the case of the establishment of communist rule in South Vietnam after 1975 or leave space for negotiating new norms as in which personal memories do I share on Facebook and how. Research on particular personal uses of mnemonic media technologies showed that conventions of social uses partially persist and are re-negotiated. Particularly, research on (media) nostalgia in communication and media research demonstrated that communicating memories can function as a negotiation and coping strategy in times of societal change.

Fifth, communicating memories is always subject to and result of power relations. Important socialization agents who establish norms of communicating memories such as

parents within families, teachers within schools, policy makers within states usually represent and reproduce certain power structures within a given social group or society. Knowledge, norms and practices of communicating memories thus can also partially be imposed by the state in e.g. in societies led by authoritarian regimes like the SRV. While sociotechnical affordances of media technologies can provide potentials of connectivity, participation, alternate views and democratization, previous case studies have shown that hierarchies and power relations are also inherent in these technologies on the side of technology providers and regulators. While the previous studies dealt with personalized, participatory and/or amateur uses of media technologies, the following chapter is concerned with the appropriation of standardized content or products of media communication (Krotz 2001, 24) and thus standardized media representations of memory meant for wider publics.

### 3.1.2 Audience and appropriation research on mediated memories

This review of selected empirical audience and appropriation studies summarizes and systemizes how individuals use mass media and thus standardized communication for mnemonic purposes. It also includes research that examined how former appropriation of mass media informs people's present collective memory and thus views of the past. I have identified three strands of empirical research within audience studies. They differentiate according to the nature of media content that was studied:

- 1) the appropriation of historical, commemorative and nostalgic media formats,
- 2) the appropriation of news and media events
- 3) the appropriation of music.

These types of media content equal the types of mediated pasts people engage with. All these forms have in common that they represent institutionalized, standardized and potentially widely circulated forms of communication. Their content and narratives are meant for wider audiences. In contrast to the previous subchapter on mnemonic forms of (mediated) interpersonal communication that presented a wide array of possible mnemonic communication practices to construct own content, the range of practices related to standardized forms is more limited for individuals and social groups. Standardized forms of communication leave little room for individuals or users to actually alter the original content at a practice level.

People do, however, engage with and interpret such content differently, negotiate them against the background of other sources and previous knowledge and encounter them with

varying degrees of acceptance. Such standardized content can again become subject of other (mediated) interpersonal communication practices, e.g. when a child asks about her grandmother's war experience after having watched a TV documentary about the Dien Bien Phu battle in Vietnam.

The following overview therefore focuses particularly on how mass-mediated representations of memory are perceived, negotiated and integrated in the everyday lives of people during and after their reception.

### *3.1.2.1 Appropriation of historical, commemorative and nostalgic media formats*

The first strand of research comprises the consumption of popularized, mass-mediated representations of history, commemorative and nostalgic media as distinct representations of collective memory. Research suggests that historical, commemorative and nostalgic media, either fictional or non-fictional, contribute to people's understandings, knowledge and imaginations about the past in the everyday. In this strand of research, we need to be aware of the fact that the findings speak to first, different phases in the reception and appropriation process; second, to varying characteristics and kinds of media texts and consequently to different practices or ways of engaging with these texts.

Sabina Mihelj (2017, 240-241) noted in the context of post-socialist nostalgia research that media texts researchers select for investigating nostalgia are not necessarily the ones that people find meaningful for remembering. Basic media use and appropriation research taught us that individuals' media selection follows specific personal needs, interests and expectations (Palmgreen 1983, 3; Hasebrink 2015, 5; Carpentier 2011, 192). Can we make the same claim for mnemonic communication in general and the selection of historic, commemorative and nostalgic media in particular? In other words, do individuals select specific media content depending on what they are seeking to commemorate or nostalgically remember?

Stefanie Armbruster's (2016) reception study of nostalgic fictional television showed that a personal connection to media content is what makes media texts relevant for viewers' collective remembering in the first place. Such a connection or relevance is e.g. grounded in previous biographic and media experience and memories of watching a particular TV show during youth (ibid., 370-372). If personal memories of particular life stages, events or media create a personal relevance of the media content for individuals and their selection is determined by such relevance, then we may argue that selecting historic, commemorative and nostalgic media depends among others on (media) biographies.

Other studies suggest that the selection of and turning to specific historic media content is dependent on previously gained knowledge about the topic and thus earlier components of their MCR. In their empirical study on German highschool students' reception and appropriation of the German war drama "Downfall" (2004), Hofmann et al. (2005, 142) found a recency effect among the students who were more knowledgeable about Nazi-Germany. This recency effect affected following media practices. After viewing the film, these students selected and focused more on information about German victimhood as a specific theme. The research team argued that the movie might have updated narratives from family conversations and brought these back to the fore of their historical consciousness (ibid.). The research suggests that this updated prior knowledge during and after watching the movie determined following selection decisions of media content on the topic. This result resonates to some extent with Kroogsgard's (2017) suggested interdependence of the degree of openness in family communication and individuals' selection of historic mass media about the same time period (see also Finger 2017, 154). Few empirical studies have actually provided a systematic overview on people's motives in turning to historic, commemorative and nostalgic mass-mediated content.

Besides prior knowledge, personal relevance and interest, people's media choices also seem to be based on what they expect from a certain media outlet or form and whether they think it fits their needs (Palmgreen 1983, 3). In her dissertation on Holocaust media repertoires among Germans, Juliane Finger (2017, 151) discovered that e.g. individuals' need for information and preferences in media were dependent on the assumed degree of authenticity of a media format. When individuals wanted to learn about historical events they tended to turn to documentaries (ibid.). In her study of the use of websites on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, Hein (2009, 231-234) noted that most people used commemorative websites in a previously intended search for information and found them through online search engines or links on other websites. Informing followed by commemorating were more important to historic and commemorative website users than other motives such as communication or participation. The reasons for the need for historic information diverged according to types of users. While students' interests were induced from schools, teachers looked for information because of their professional role and potential memorial visitors searched information before a visit of the site (ibid.). In this regard, Hein's (2009) findings indicate that the social roles and age of users determined their informational needs about collective pasts and thus their practices. The study also

importantly acknowledges that different elements of the historic and commemorative websites addressed different needs (ibid., 235-236).

Other empirical findings on the appropriation of historic, commemorative and nostalgic media focused their research on the phases during and after reception of particular media content. Instead of asking how and why people turn to specific media, some media case studies brought forth results on how people read, interpret, act upon and recall elements of mnemonic media texts short-term and long-term. It can be noted that particular characteristics and elements of mass-mediated content such as narrative, plot, figures, aesthetics and visuals can bring about particular reception effects.

In terms of perceived authenticity of e.g. historic content, several researchers found that fictional media formats and/or elements contribute to a perceived historical reality, imagination about the past and thus collective memory as much as non-fictional ones (Welzer et al. 2002; Ebbrecht 2010). Welzer's research team (2002, 133) found that narratives in fictional movies and novels were even more popular among their research participants than those in obviously didactic and educational media. Similarly, Finger (2017, 149) found in her study on Holocaust repertoires that respondents usually recalled more details from fictional historic TV than from documentaries. Yet, time witness reports remain an important marker for historical authenticity (Finger/Wagner 2014, 343) and hold moral authority in the reception of media texts (Finger 2017, 151). Further, the personalization of mediated content through e.g. time witnesses or protagonists of a story seems to make historical content more accessible to media users (ibid., 149; Reifova et al. 2013, 205; Frosh 2018). In another audience study on a commemorative popular Czech TV show about state-socialist times (*Vjpravej*), Reifova and colleagues (2013, 207) e.g. found that fictional and non-fictional elements in the series produced two different reception effects among viewers: while the non-fictional documentary elements produced authenticity and thus credibility of the historical framework, the fictional part of the family story in the TV series triggered personal identification with the show's protagonists (ibid., 207). The research team further found that "retro-signifiers" in the TV show provided particular cues for viewers to engage with the past. "Retro-signifiers" were visual elements, represented stereotypes, ritual practices and historical events that characterized socialist times in the eyes of members of the TV audiences (ibid., 206-208). "Retro-signifiers" in this sense can contribute to the perceived authenticity of mediated memories. Particular characteristics of media texts therefore can encourage people's engagement with the past and play into mnemonic communication practices.

During reception, viewers draw from previous knowledge and memories. They compare their own lived experience to mediated representations of the past if they cover same time periods (Reifova et al. 2013, 210). Armbruster (2016, 370-371) noted that TV programs invoked nostalgic sentiments only among viewers who considered them as an integral, positive part of their personal past. These studies suggest that personal memories are part of the media reception experience. Other studies showed that watching historical or commemorative TV programs or movies can further update (Hofmann et al. 2005, 142) or complement prior historical knowledge from other sources (Welzer et al. 2002, 199). They can invoke emotions and empathy even about times not lived (Finger 2017, 177). Media texts therefore seem to enfold their mnemonic relevance to individuals during the reception process in relation to prior knowledge, to other communicative actors and sources.

Moreover, historic, commemorative and nostalgic media can be appropriated in the long-run and tie in with other MCPs. Their content, symbols and narratives can become part of people's stocks of knowledge and consciousness about the past. These can also become subjects of follow-up communication on collective memories. In this sense, Reifova and colleagues (2013, 205) argued that television "provides 'food for memory'". They found that viewers of the researched commemorative TV series also picked up the narratives of the show and conducted a historical fact check, comparing it to their own prior knowledge. After viewing the show, viewers thus acted upon the media content in the group discussions. They took on the roles of critics, experts, nostalgics or moralists and negotiated national history and own lived past (ibid., 210). Armbruster (2016, 377) also noted that nostalgic sentiments can arise not only during, but also after the reception of TV programs. In follow-up communication about nostalgic television she found that people used a modus of "referential framing" in relating television content to their own lifeworlds in order to make sense of both (ibid., 378).

Media effects researchers argued that the consumption of historic and commemorative media can also affect political attitudes, behavior and historical consciousness. Hofmann et al. (2005, 137) for example found increased patriotic sentiments and identification with national symbols among young German viewers who watched the German war drama "Downfall". The patriotic or less critical stance towards the movie, however, depended on the personal characteristics of the students, mainly their general sense of patriotism (ibid., 142). Dohle et al. (2003, 305) detected short-term effects on antisemitic attitudes of German high school students after viewing the TV documentary "Holokaust". In their

quasi experiment, they found empirical evidence that antisemitic attitudes reduced among students after watching highly emotionalized scenes of the documentary. Although these effects levelled again two weeks after reception for most students, the degree of emotionalization clearly made a difference initially (ibid.). Particularly negative or positive emotions during reception of historic media led participants of another study recall the historic media content in more detail (Finger 2017, 148). Prior knowledge and the degree of education also led to different results on how persistent these changes were. Those at a lower educational level showed a more enduring effect of reduced antisemitic attitudes (ibid.).

While it is not the aim of this thesis to explore cognitive or behavioral, short-term or long-term effects of particular media content, it is important to consider previous research in that field in order to be aware of the complexity of mnemonic communication processes. Although this dissertation concentrates on communicating memories as social practices, the reviewed results contribute to clarify what else may factor in to people's choices, preferences and acts of engaging with collective pasts. They help to examine and interpret people's intentions, generation of knowledge and sense-making in interaction with mass media. In this review of research on appropriating historic, commemorative and nostalgic media, we have encountered several factors to be considered in explaining different ways of communicating memories. These include personal relevance and biographic (media) experiences, personal interest, personal needs and motives, prior knowledge and education, media format and elements of representation, personal characteristics and attitudes, perceived authenticity, emotions, age. The review showed that people make sense of their own lifeworlds and pasts in relation to appropriated mass-mediated representations of the past and vice versa in a complex web of personal and social factors. Given these multi-layered engagements with collective pasts and versatile interdependencies of e.g. media user's motivations, characteristics and textual factors, Reifova et al. (2013, 217) named these appropriation processes "memory presumption" that is rather "a patchwork of personal needs and textual offerings". We therefore need to look very carefully at how people actually make sense of their own actions when communicating memories.

### *3.1.2.2 Appropriation of news and media events*

Similar to some of the previously discussed reception studies, the strand of research dealing with the remembrance of news and media events often applies a notion of memory that is understood as a socially framed, but cognitive process of reception or knowledge appropriation. Central questions are: what is remembered, why and what does that say

about the formation of collective memory as a sort of mental map? Research on (the ability of) recalling publicly mediated events seeks to clarify their public and social impact, their relevance in people's lifeworlds, for their historical consciousness and sense of identity.

Volkmer's (2006d, 259) global media project on public memory combined research on news and media events reception with qualitative research on media biographies and socialization. They found that media biographies and recalled media events came along with distinctive senses of place and space. In their internationally comparative study, Volkmer (2006d, 258) explored "generational entelechies" across the researched countries. "Entelechies" describe common experiences of a lifespan as a similar historical location (Mannheim 1959, 291) that condition memories of media and bring forth "stratified consciousness" (ibid.; Volkmer 2006d, 258). Whereas in the oldest –the radio– generation, for example, space is defined "in very distinctive relations to the world" through international news and media events which were mainly human interest, sports and international events, the middle or TV generation in several countries was more proximate to the US and the popcultural media formats produced there (ibid., 259-260) (for further details, see next chapter). In an overall conclusion the study suggests that people's perception of the world is bound to memories of news and political events (ibid., 262) and that these perceptions differ within different age cohorts due to their different cultural backgrounds and media biographies.

In another international study, Corning and Schuman (2015, 198) presented empirical evidence that commemorative anniversary coverage and thus "the timing and intensity of media coverage" increased collective memories (which they understand as collective knowledge) among research participants. In other words, the public salience of an event can increase the recognition and knowledge about an event; its publicly mediated commemoration the assigned importance. Generally they noted, however, that survey participants were rather concerned about an event's impact on their own personal lives than about its larger political or symbolic significance (ibid., 107).

These findings correspond with O'Sullivan's (2007, 74-75) empirical results that showed that media events such as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, the assassination of J.F. Kennedy or sports events presented vivid memories by British respondents. Instead of inquiring on specific events and sources of information, O'Sullivan (2007) took a reversed approach, asking about early TV memories that were then often related to media events. He further showed that memories about media use experiences often mark biographic and shared lifetime events for people (ibid., 79).

In the Israeli context, Cohen et al. (2018) explored the perception, recognition and meaning-making of salient domestic and international media events in the form of iconic news images. Contrary to Corning and Schuman (2015), Cohen et al.'s (2018, 474) findings do not support the argument that higher media attention and acclaim increases recognition, at least for news photographs and related events. Nick Ut's Pulitzer Prize winning image of Kim Phuc running from a Napalm Attack in South Vietnam (Chong 2001) for example was among the least five recognized international photographs (Cohen et al. 2018, 474). Accordingly, the research team concluded that iconic news images were very scarce across age groups (ibid., 472). The most recognized images depicted conflict, trauma and triumph and thus were the ones provoking negative and positive emotions (ibid., 474). Generally, older, more educated and more historically interested respondents scored higher in recognizing images whereas those whose general prime source for news were social media scored low (ibid.). Again, these studies emphasize age, education and media socialization/biographies as indicators for difference among social groups in collective remembering. Empiric findings diverge to some degree on the issue of the interdependence of public salience of events and collective memory. Cultural proximity, media change and personal relevance and are likely to play into this relationship and bring forth varying results. A majority of the empirical studies discussed so far stressed the significance of emotions in communicating memories. The last strand of reception and appropriation research likewise looks into a medium that is prominently associated with emotional states: music.

### 3.1.2.3 *Appropriation of music and sounds*

Music as an element of mass-mediated popular culture received little attention in communication and memory studies (Garde-Hansen 2011, 121). Pickering and Keightley (2015, 4) noted that communication history has largely neglected music as cultural technology, devoting most of its attention to press, radio, television and cinema. They found in a pilot study on technologies of remembering that recorded music, analogue and digital, was the most relevant media in people's everyday lives besides photography (Pickering/Keightley 2013, 105). Music is "densely interwoven into the fabric of vernacular memory" (ibid., 2015, 12). Guesdon and Le Guern (2014, 73) argued that music's mnemonic power lies in the affective, social and biographic dimension and the repetitiveness of its reception.

[...] the hit in itself has a particular relation to the past. [...] The emotion related to listening to a hit, listening in the sensitised state and through inner repetition, is composed of affects

linked to occurrences of perception. Following the first listening and the replay, an inner melody is created and changes according to successive encounters of the song; it is marked by experienced events while keeping track of the very first listening occurrence. By encompassing both the memory of the discovery and the variations (depending on contexts, emotions) created by each repetition, the hit has a specific power of recollection. (Guesdon/Le Guern 2014, 72-73)

Music and its invoking emotions in this sense function as a temporal anchor that helps to locate certain experiences within people's own biography and in history. Sounds can thus create "a sense of belonging" (Bijsterveld/van Dijck 2009, 11). Volkmer et al.'s (2006d, 260-261) study showed that a wider range of informants recalled rock music from the US in original and modified versions and Germans often recognized the jingle of the "Wehrmacht report" that situated them in time and space. The impact of Nazi propagandistic use of music in education and social life in long-term memory was investigated more deeply by Carolyn Birdsall (2009, 174) whose elderly respondents were still very acquainted with the lyrics and melody of indoctrinated sounds such as the national anthem of Nazi Germany. Seniors would also engage in the singing of folk songs during their regular group meetings. While some of the songs were also used as Nazi propaganda, these were not perceived as political or ideological by the informants who engaged in the performative memory work, legitimizing their childhood memories (ibid., 175-176).

In present social media, fan groups share experiences and connect on the basis of their favorite music and artists (Garde-Hansen 2011; Kaun/Stierstedt 2016). Kaun and Stierstedt (2016, 202) illustrated in their research on fans of a GDR youth radio how digitization and social media facilitated access to recordings of jingles and entire radio shows that are otherwise not aired anymore. The textual responses in their research predominantly articulated nostalgic sentiments that referred to their youth and adolescence, but not political ideology (ibid., 204-205). In the context of Western celebrity and fandom culture, Garde-Hansen (2011, 134) argued that "pop music and nostalgia create a powerful marketable mix that evoke youthfulness", which is strongly tied to commodity culture and forming identities.

The self-reflection of one's life course, setting marks of time and making sense of oneself in time through music already starts during individuals' formative years (Hartung et al. 2009, 118). Music also serves to stick out or differentiate oneself from other generational or social groups (ibid.; Weber 2009, 81). Memories associated with music, however, also encompass social bonds with other human beings, common experiences with others, events or particular life stages (Hartung et al. 2009, 117). In a similar vein, Pickering and Keightley (2015, 70-71, 86) denoted music as "time-travel tropes" that can also be

involuntary and irrespective of personal tastes. Involuntary remembering can occur in relation to traumatic events such the sound of bomb shells that evokes war time memories (Birdsall 2009, 176). Memories through music can moreover elicit during "dedicated listening" or while doing something else (Weber 2009, 69).

Hartung et al. (2009, 117) described music as "container of emotions" that can preserve past experiences and emotions. Pickering and Keightley's (2015, 72-76) empirical data showed supportive of that notion that music often evokes emotional and "site-specific" responses, including car journeys and experiences of traveling. Listening to music invokes a wide range of "affective feelings and moods" (ibid., 166) that at the same time are very personal. This intimacy of emotions and memories evoked by music puts limits to practices of sharing these memories according to Pickering and Keightley (2015, 166) as they are strongly bound to the individual value and initial hearing experience. The authors further found that the mnemonic power of music also lies in having "temporal distinction[s]" collapse. It can create such an immediacy of a memory that the boundaries of past and present dissolve in the moment of remembrance (ibid., 164). In an astonishing example about traumatic World War II sonic memories, Birdsall (2009, 177) described how one of her informants would switch into her childhood German dialect (*Plattdeutsch*) every time when hearing sirens, triggering a state of shock.

Bijsterveld and van Dijck (2009, 13) pointed out that "music's ability to elicit highly personal emotions and associations seems to help people to relive their past over and over again." The empirical data in their edited volume "Sound Souvenirs" further suggested that the capacity of recalling musical recordings is higher than of other non-musical recordings or everyday sounds, e.g. of family events (ibid.). Such comparative angles in people's media uses and remembering are crucial for understanding everyday engagements with collective pasts. The next chapter therefore focuses more on such comparative aspects of communications and memory research on two accounts — generational and cross-media perspectives — in order to examine how various mnemonic communication practices and forms conflate in the everyday.

## **3.2 Conflating perspectives of communicating memories in the everyday: cross-communicative, generational and socio-political aspects**

The everyday perspective and the practical turn in communication and memory research both require sensitivity to social contexts and promote more holistic approaches. Part of this implied demand is to acknowledge that in their everyday lives people engage with a great variety of communicative contacts; certain upbringings, social roles and relations within social groups may bring about differences in communicative action; and socio-political characteristics of an particular living environment condition practices in the everyday. A focus on the everyday, repertoires and practices in empirical research gives respect to these three conflating perspectives across singular processes of media and communication. Reviewing these conflating aspects of the cross-communicative, the generational and the socio-political in research in the following illustrates how personal and collective, private and public memories intersect in various ways and move along a continuum (van Dijck 2007, 21-22). They are outcomes of communicative action, historical and socio-political processes.

### **3.2.1 Cross-media and transcommunicative aspects**

Little scholarly work actually addressed the ways individuals combine or negotiate different communicative forms of remembering, different stocks of knowledge and representations about the past in the everyday. That is particularly true for the relationship of (mediated) interpersonal communication and standardized communication.

From sociological research on Holocaust memories, we have learned that mass-mediated representations can complement family conversations and histories about the same time period (Welzer et al. 2002, 199). The other way around family memories can function as a filter for the interpretation of mass-mediated content on the same historical topic (Leonhard 2002, 295). Media effect research further showed that interpersonally communicated family memories can be updated during the reception of mass-media such as films and can determine further selection processes in people's mnemonic communication repertoire (Hofmann et al. 2005, 142). Findings from several qualitative studies in communication and memory research support this suggested interdependence of the quality of mnemonic familial communication and the selection of mass-mediated texts.

In the context of Holocaust repertoires, Finger (2017, 195) found that for some informants family contacts outweighed media contacts in importance as a source of knowledge on Germany's Nazi past. In these types of repertoires, families are also usually the first encounter with the topic (ibid., 196) as Leonhard (2002, 295) similarly described. That is the case e.g. when parents are particularly interested in history (Finger 2017, 158). Elder respondents who were born during or after WW II more often experienced the Holocaust as a taboo topic in families and therefore relied on TV, cinema and books as initial sources of information (ibid., 154). Those who relied most on TV were only sporadically interested in the topic, which for them was neither discussed in families nor in school (ibid., 187). Similar patterns of complementation of communicative contacts, compensation or perpetuation of taboos were found in Krogsgaard's (2017, 373) study on media uses of descendants of Danish Nazi collaborators and the dominant representations of their predecessors in public memory. The findings also suggest that degree of openness or tabooing the family's Nazi past in familial conversations is indicative of individuals' media repertoire on the topic. The intensity of interpersonal communication and thus the degree of communicative perpetuation varied among the families, resulting in divergent media repertoires of informants: when the Danish Nazi past was a taboo topic in families, informants avoided other German Occupation-related media; when familial conversations were limited but existing, respondents' repertoires on WW II were broad; when family conversations were open, media texts played a less significant role (ibid., 373-374). The role of time witnesses is also particularly significant in this regard. Leonhard (2002, 296) claimed that mass media grow in importance as a resource of knowledge about Nazi Germany with the disappearance of time witnesses and as these times become less connected to the evaluation of one's own family history.

In the context of WW II memories and popular communist-era TV productions in Poland, Szostak and Mihelj (2017, 333) noted that respondents found enjoyment in the entertaining, yet propagandistic, series *Four Tankmen and a Dog* that contrasted with traumatic narrations of war by family members. In comparison to the previously discussed studies, Szostak and Mihelj's (2017) research suggests that not only the openness about a particular past in family talk matters for the mnemonic communication repertoire, but also the types of pre-existing narratives in the family. While in this case study media provided a welcome alternative narrative and access to war memories, some of the German and Danish case studies on WW II and Holocaust memories suggested a greater alignment of family narratives or taboos and mass media selection and interpretation (Welzer et al. 2002;

Hofmann et al. 2005; Krogsgaard 2017). Such an alignment or blending of face-to-face narratives with mass-mediated ones is also indicated in Lohmeier and Pentzold's (2014) study, where nostalgic narratives on Cuban-American radio corresponded with sentiments of loss expressed in personal conversations. Then again time witness and familial encounters inform other, also alternate mnemonic activities such as blogging about the Cuban-American community (ibid., 785). Collective memories communicated in the family and diasporic community media can mix with firsthand experiences and information from homeland media (Lohmeier 2014, 136-139). The empirical studies imply that such mechanisms of alignment, contrast or mixing of narratives in familial and standardized communication are largely conditioned by social acceptance and norms of these narratives in public or social group memory and personal interests in the past. It remains, however, an empirical challenge to assess how narratives of varying social contexts condition each other. Memories' "context-bound nature" complicates research endeavours that apply reconstructive methods (Mihelj 2013, 72).

A stark contrast between personal narratives, historical consciousness and mass-mediated, publicly wide circulated narrative was found in Meyen's (2013) study on collective memories of the GDR. Collectively remembering the GDR in focus groups corresponded only very little with GDR narratives in the analyzed German media coverage since 1990. The divergence of narratives in German media coverage and interpersonal narratives was particularly great among former residents of the GDR (ibid., 165/225). Contrasting collective memories and their struggle for legitimacy also surfaced in public commemoration rites addressed to former GDR organizations (Leonhard 2014). Meyen (2013, 167) described this gap between collective narratives about the past as indicative of a "communicative memory" (Assmann/Assmann 1994) among time witnesses that concentrates on everyday experiences on the one hand and a politicized cultural memory as produced in mass media on the other hand. Some of the former GDR residents even rejected mass-mediated content a priori because they already had certain expectations about what it may contain and how GDR life may be depicted. Because of this perceived gap and lack of identification with public representations of the GDR past, Meyen (2013, 226) described family and peer communication, e.g. table talks among regulars, as major modes to articulate and exchange memories with people of social groups that share a common ground of experience (having lived in the GDR) and that are not found in dominant narratives in mass media. In this limiting of subordinate narratives to intimate circles, Meyen (2013, 225) sees support for classic public opinion theories such as Noelle-

Neumann's (1980) spiral of silence and third-person effects (Davison 1983) because people hesitate to voice their assumed minority views in broader public. Meyen (2013, 225) concluded that the media coverage in Germany since 1990 that depicts the GDR as a period and state of dictatorship coincides only with mnemonic narratives of people who do not have a personal connection to the topic and thus no direct experiences and own memories of the GDR. That is the case because people did not interact with former GDR residents or had no encounters with their points of view or they were simply too young respectively (ibid.). These concluding remarks suggest that time witness encounters and (mediated) personal experience can make a decisive difference in people's mnemonic communication repertoires and the ways they engage and make sense of the past. In sum, studies that investigated family, peer and standardized communication showed that their relationship can be symbiotic, complementing, contrasting and contesting depending on people's scope and nature of repertoires, their (historical) socialization, their personal experiences, interests and media expectations and the social acceptance of narratives in a respective group or social entity.

Little empirical work so far addressed the comparison of various uses of media technologies or media sources of information. Studies that are either historical topic- or practice-oriented, however, cut across various media technologies and communicative options in their research perspective. Finger (2017, 189) observed that for the type of historically interested respondents, the Holocaust repertoire was broad and television held similar importance as books and cinema. In Hein's (2009, 239) earlier Holocaust remembrance study, more than half of the respondents specified historical textbooks as their main source of information followed by memorials and mass media. Back then only 18% considered the Internet their most important source (ibid.). While there is no comparable quantitative data, Finger's (2017) qualitative study showed that the assigned value of a particular media source varied among informants. Some saw more credibility in books than "the Internet" (ibid., 162). Those with a narrower repertoire relied more on TV (ibid., 187). The value of a particular communicative source or media technology can also change over the course of time (ibid., 194).

Further, Pickering and Keightley (2015) have thoroughly examined and compared mnemonic practices related to photography and music in the everyday. While both technologies unfold their value in people's purposive uses of them, their varying properties bring about different practices and purposes (ibid., 177). One major difference is that photographs are taken with the intent for future remembering while music often evinces its

mnemonic significance only later (*ibid.*). Both technologies produce artefacts and media objects as cue for entangled acts of remembering and communicating in the everyday.

These pieces of the past do not exist as isolated fragments somehow surviving over time and do not operate on their own with no reference to each other. As mnemonic resources, they are arranged and used interchangeably in the common coinage of social encounter and exchange [...] (Pickering/Keightley 2015, 180)

The focus on communication practices and thus the social uses of media technologies as material mnemonic objects or means of communication reveals motifs for collective remembering and allows for comparisons of particular uses. Lohmeier and Pentzold's (2014, 782-783) study shows for example how the archiving practice of Cuban publications by a private collector enhances in significance through other practices. With the donation his own collected artefacts to a public archive, the collector rendered a service to the whole diasporic community. The example illustrates how mnemonic communication practices can be interdependent and how their combination can change their social impact.

The entanglement of mnemonic communication practices is particularly apparent and fused in online spaces. Given this conflation, Alfonso (2016, 185) speak of "contextual acts of remembering", pointing out the interconnectedness of e.g. the blogosphere with news media in the Cuban-American diasporic context. Media change and digitization prompted some memory researchers to zoom in on practices regarding particular discourses, themes, events of the past and social groups instead of particular technologies. Investigating the online discourse on the trial of former Nazi concentration camp warden John Demjanjuk, Vivien Sommer (2018, 223-233) shows how individuals used quotes, images of and links to mass-mediated content to comment and underscore their own opinion in posts on news sites, blogs or social media. Mass-mediated content in this sense provides an occasion for mnemonic discourse and serves as a reference point, in some cases even as a reference for credibility and legitimizing one's own standpoint. In another example of Holocaust memories online, Kansteiner (2018, 126) emphasizes the encounter of opposing narratives in social media, stating that on Facebook institutionalized, "[...] carefully balanced, politically correct cosmopolitan Holocaust memory comes in direct, dysfunctional contact with the kinds of antagonistic and agonistic memories that pervade everyday life [...]." Such encounters become particularly apparent with marginal or revisionist practices of remembering the Holocaust online (Sommer 2018, 235). These views support most scholars' assumptions that digitization and digital media platforms potentially heighten the diversity and inclusion of perspectives that challenge dominant narratives in a "post-scarcity culture" (Hoskins 2018, 3; Garde-Hansen 2011, 46; Lohmeier 2014, 136).

Technological affordances of digital media also do allow for easier appropriation, replication, modification and sharing of existing content and thus embedding them or creating ones own narratives with and through them. Boudana et al. (2017) illustrates this development in their research on the alteration and circulation of memes of iconic photographs online. Looking at Nick Ut's picture of the accidental Napalm attack in South Vietnam, the research team argues that the multiplicity of ways people modify and share memes of it decontextualizes and repurposes the original photograph. In some cases, the image even runs risk to be deprived of its original iconic, "political and ethical significance." (ibid., 19) Garde-Hansen (2011, 114) describes a similarly relativizing impression of the same image, when comparing it to ITN's colored archival video footage made available online. Garde-Hansen (2011, 107-118) addresses processes of refashioning and remediation and stresses the participatory potential for increasingly media literate individuals to engage with mediated forms of historical knowledge online, publishing and also mixing these with own past life experiences, e.g. on YouTube. The social media platform allows for more self-determined and creative video and filmmaking practices that mash up public historical or fictional footage with self-produced images, sounds and video footage.

From a reversed perspective, Smit et al. (2017) examined video-sharing and curating practices of witness footage in the Syrian conflict, being reutilized by various actors ranging from activists, news outlets to citizens that shaped public debate and collective memories of conflict. The study shows that similar witness content serves different purposes depending on actor's "professional, political and ethical motives" (ibid., 300). Uploaders' remediation and different embedding of content anticipated particular readings (ibid. 303) Similar to Kaun and Stierstedt (2014), Smit et al. (2017, 300-304), point out that practices are also conditioned by technical affordances of the platform and algorithmic logics of YouTube, e.g. through pre-defined categorization and tagging of uploaded content and reproduce power asymmetries. More institutionalized "legacy" and "web-native media" gained greater visibility in terms of search results and clicks than citizens' and activists' accounts (ibid., 300-301). The study suggests that institutionalized media act more effectively in their memory work with regard to visibility online and that the credibility and standing of sources remains a significant factor in the usage of witness content (ibid., 303). Prior research on remembering online clearly showed how mnemonic communication practices diversified and at the same time dissolved boundaries of previous analytical categories of the public and private or institutional and personal, the historical and the (auto-)biographical. There are understood as the endpoints of several continua (van Dijck

2007, 21-22). Studies on remembering in a digital media environment encouraged researchers to focus on the space between these analytical endpoints and think outside of the box. Often these observations concentrate on online spaces and online practices only. Van Dijck (2007, 115) emphasized, however, that changes in collective remembering are not only technologically driven, but they are embedded in wider cultural frameworks and social transformations such as individualization, mobility and connectivity that determine the social use of changing media technologies. Moreover, Keightley and Pickering (2014) motivate us to look at the continuity of certain practices and motifs surrounding analogue and digital media technologies, which they detected in regard to the use of photography.

Given the vast multiplicity, diversity and complexity of possible mnemonic practices and the entanglements of communicative content reviewed in this chapter, it is even more important to investigate what ways of remembering people or audiences themselves find relevant in their everyday lives, which intentions inform and motivate their own mnemonic practices and how they make sense of them. What social purposes do they serve them?

A lot of empirical studies singled out specific topics, media technologies, mnemonic sites or practices. Is communicating memories, however, always an explicit voluntary endeavour? How does it speak to people's present social needs? This dissertation therefore relies on people's own accounts on what drives their mnemonic actions and which ones are obvious or important to them in a complex and transcommunicative environment. The focus of this thesis is not on the actual construction process of collective memories or how it changed with digital media, but instead on people's defined social purposes and meaning-making in communicating memories. Several studies suggested that these purposes, meaning-making and thus the repertoire of mnemonic communication practices differs in various life stages as well as according to socialization and social roles. The next chapter therefore concentrates on generational aspects of empirical memory studies.

### 3.2.2 Generational aspects

Having reviewed transcommunicative relations in communicating memories, I now turn to generational aspects as meta-perspective on communication and memory research. The term "generation" presents multiple meanings in academia (Becker 2008, 217; Corsten 2010, 134). In communication and memory research, "generation" often serves as a comparative analytical category to indicate e.g. social roles and lineages of kinship (grandparents, parents, etc.) or migration (1st, 1.5 or 2nd generation), specific age/birth cohort or collectivities that share "a common location in the social and historical process"

(Mannheim 1959, 291) such as so-called "'68ers" in Germany or "baby boomers" in the US. The latter Mannheimian (1959) understanding suggests that people of a similar historical location are endowed with a similar range of shared experience through social and political events during their formative years (Olick/Robbins 1998, 123). Although the Mannheimian concept of generation is not designated to "concrete groups" per se (Mannheim 1959, 288), it is assumed that a shared historical location and experiences can forge a "we-sense" and thus particular sense of belonging to a certain imagined group (Bolin 2017, 9). In memory research, scholars are therefore often interested in the question whether individuals that share similar locations in time and space and thus memories of certain events, actually create a similar collective (historical) consciousness (Wangler 2012). That also includes the epistemological interest in how knowledge is transmitted across generations (Pickering/Keightley 2013). Empirically this has been researched e.g. in assessing whether same birth cohorts share common knowledge about historical events and make similar meaning of them (Schuman/Corning 2015). Applied to the Vietnamese context, this generational perspective raises the question on whether war experiences, unification or reform times (*Doi Moi*) create similar associative forces and senses of belonging among people who experienced them during their childhood and youth. Reversely, does the experiencing of certain socio-political events create differences in communicating memories in comparison to those who did not directly experience those events?

Similar to Halbwachs (2008), Mannheim (1959, 296) clearly discerned between "appropriated memories" and "personally acquired memories." Mannheim (ibid.) argued that the latter "[...] is the only sort of knowledge which really 'sticks' and it alone has binding power." Given the great degree of remediation of representations and narratives of memories in the digital age this statement requires at least further investigation. Conceptions of postmemory (Hirsch 2012) and prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004) theoretically contradict such an argument. Similarly, empiric results on the effects of non-fictional media content as contributing to a historical imagination and consciousness (Welzer et al. 2002; Finger 2017) stand in contrast to Mannheim's (1959, 296) assumption. The saturation of everyday life with media technologies has led several media scholars to elaborate on Mannheim's notion of "generation" in the sense of "media generations" (Volkmer 2006a; Hepp et al. 2014; Bolin 2017). The notion of "media generations" presumes that generational experience and thus a "we-sense" is not only based on socio-political events but on media experience (Bolin 2017, 10). It is assumed that growing up with a particular media technology and media content brings forth generational patterns of

everyday media use (Röser 2007, 17; Hoffmann 2010, 12; Oppermann 2014), senses of belonging (Hepp et al. 2014) and collective (historical) consciousness. Generational media experiences in the context of memory research include e.g. the experience of socio-political events through appropriation of news and other media content (Volkmer 2006a), the appropriation of particular media technologies, objects or music rooted in time and space (Bolin 2017, 10). Empirical communication and memory research usually utilizes a similarly broad range of generational concepts, including birth cohorts, socio-political and media events, lived and media experiences as defining markers. In this dissertation, past media and communicative experiences or socialization (e.g. in South or North Vietnam or before and after the advent of digital media technologies) are understood as part of an individual's social and historical location besides age, experienced socio-political and personal life events.

Prior empirical research usually examined the variously defined generational groups in regard to their differences or transmission processes of collective memories. Comparative perspectives suggest that age e.g. accounts for different readings of mnemonic texts. That implies that different cohorts based on their diverging live experiences appropriated mediated content of and about the past differently. Older Polish viewers of a communist-era TV series about WW II (*Four Tankmen and a Dog*) for example assigned political meaning to the show while younger ones did not (Szostak/Mihelj 2017, 330). On the basis of their own stock of knowledge of WW II history, the elderly belonging to the first post-war generation (1940s-50s) often denounced the series as propagandistic while the younger perceived it as an entertainment show only. The authors argued that the category of age had greater explanatory value than political affiliation in viewer's different meaning making of the historical show (ibid., 331).

Further comparative empirical memory research suggests that varying media socializations also coincide with different collective consciousnesses about the past and patterns of mnemonic communication practices. Volkmer (2006d, 261) for example found that in the older "radio generation" access and knowledge of past news differed depending on the political regime, technological infrastructure and openness of media systems respondents grew up with in the varying countries. Other cross-cultural analyses confirmed politics, cultural traditions and different media landscapes as factors for international and generational differences (Bolin 2017, 95). Volkmer (2006d, 261), however, detected growing transnational connectedness in later media generations. She argued that common media experience through the globalization of news in the "TV generation" shaped "a

political identity" of that generation across countries largely determined by news on the Vietnam War and related protests (ibid.). The TV generation presented wider knowledge and visual memories of international news and media events such as the moon landing or the assassination of John F. Kennedy covered by respective national mass media outlets (ibid., 262). In this Global Media Project, the youngest generation's media environment was highly individualized, diversified and determined by the networked structure of the Web. Notions of proximity were less locally and place determined but rather addressed "familiar 'mediated' characters, personalities and events." (ibid., 262) Informants often could not trace memories of particular events back to particular media.

Armbruster's (2016, 384) study on the reception of nostalgic television fiction underscored findings of the Volkmer's (2006a) Global Media Project, showing that similar media socialization provided the ground for common media memories and nostalgic sentiments within the same age group, even transnationally. Age accounted for stronger differences in media memories and nostalgic feelings than the national background (Armbruster 2016, 384). Bolin (2017, 115) provided further empirical evidence that nostalgic memories differ between generations, assuming that particular present life phases and situations such as parent or grandparenthood encourage certain nostalgic feelings. Moreover, the socialization under differing political regimes can result in different childhood nostalgias and intergenerational gaps after socio-political transitions (Reifova et al. 2013, 212-213).

Further generational differences in mnemonic media practices were found in the context of media and migration studies, where the category of "generation" usually marks temporally and culturally the experience of migration. In the Cuban American community in Miami, the younger generation being familiar with the use of digital media technologies participated strongly in communal and transnational ways of "doing memory"<sup>5</sup> online and offline (Lohmeier 2014, 126). This kind of mediated memory work of the young also questioned long prevalent (nostalgic) narratives of first generation exiles and memories' constructedness (ibid., 137). For the first generation, it was mainly diasporic media established in the 1960s and 70s that served as memory site for them to share, maintain and negotiate memories of loss, homeland and migration (ibid. 128-129). In this sense, the scope of mnemonic communication repertoires differed between the generations, with the older one relying more strongly on institutionalized diasporic media and the younger one integrating alternate online media more strongly as ways of engaging with the past and own identity.

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of "doing memory" was developed and further elaborated by anthropologists Michalis Kontopodis and Vincenzo Matera (2010).

Besides these comparative perspectives, part of (empirical) communication and memory research particularly addressed circumstances and mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of collective memories. They reveal patterns of mnemonic perpetuation that lead to a phenomenon that Hirsch (2012) theoretically termed "postmemory" — a personal connection to the past despite generational distances. Some studies in this sense suggest transgenerational continuities in remembering to some extent despite generational differences. In the context of GDR memories, Meyen (2013, 194) found that successors of former GDR citizens inherited particular narrative patterns from older time witnesses and previous generations. Meyen (2013, 224) argued that such inherited mnemonic narratives can "radicalize" and cement in the next generations if young people do not leave their original social milieu. Instead of straight inheritance, Lohmeier (2014, 139) rather observed processes of synthesis. Handed down autobiographical memories of elder generations and time witnesses persist in following generations but are synthesized with other (mass-)mediated memories and own experiences. In this case study family histories are perpetuated, but narratives change.

From a sociological point of view, Leonhard (2002, 291-295) investigated in further detail why (dis-)continuities in intergenerational remembering occur at the micro level. Her study on political and historical consciousness about Nazi Germany in German families provided empirical evidence that the style of education and the general nature of intergenerational relations in a family determine transmission processes (ibid.). With their style of education, elderly family members decide on the scope and kind of knowledge and value orientations that they think should be perpetuated (ibid., 291). Leonhard (2002, 293) argues that discontinuities and contentious discussions on the past only emerge due to other preceding family conflicts. Conflicts on the past in this sense are rather the consequence than origin of generational divides. That is also why, the sociologist argues that mnemonic perpetuation and transmission only succeeds if there is a familial consensus and kinship relations are close (ibid.). Life experiences abroad or historical education further affect familial continuity and change (ibid., 294).

From a macro perspective, sociologists Corning and Schuman (2015) also investigated what kind of knowledge sticks across generations in Mannheimian sense. They found that some transformative socio-political and historical events actually provoke what they call "life time effects". Such events like the collapse of the Soviet Union or the independence of Lithuania, "create an enduring sense of rupture in individuals' lives, leaving their mark on nearly everyone alive at the time, not only those in their critical years." (ibid., 130) Events

during times of transition leave a particularly strong impression on people (*ibid.*, 135). "Cultural vehicles" (Schudson 1992, 5) such as myths, anniversaries or school education and thus state institutionalized actors further play a powerful role in perpetuating collective memories across generations at macro level. Corning and Schuman (2015, 131) e.g. found that Israeli respondents' collective memories on the Holocaust were "nearly universal" across birth cohorts and explain this finding by the state's strongly committed memory politics through holidays, school education etc.

Although the quantitative survey tells us only broadly what events are remembered but little about the actual "how", the authors illustrated that the nature of the events and socio-political circumstances of the event, but also its collective public remembering at a given time do matter for intergenerational transmission of knowledge about the past. The next-subchapter therefore looks more closely into socio-political aspects of communicating memories in late and post-socialist societies in order to gain insights on how their members engage with the transitional histories in their countries.

### 3.2.3 Socio-political aspects: communicating memories in post-socialist societies

Having reviewed empirical research on the various communicative forms and ways of people in various life stages engaging with collective memories and their interrelations in the everyday, the following chapter concentrates on socio-political peculiarities in late or post-socialist societies. It thus seeks to outline how socio-political circumstances condition mnemonic communication after major societal transitions. In Vietnamese society, colonialism, partition, wars, unification and reforms brought about several regime changes, political unrest and social transformations.

Reviewing studies on other late- and post-socialist societies can provide a basis for comparing and situating patterns of communicating memories in Vietnam beyond the national focus. Despite cultural differences, there might be some common ground among societies that experienced a socialist past and followed similar political ideologies. While field of Cold War memory research has been predominantly national in its focus (Mihelj 2017, 241), the discipline of Cold War studies already advocated a broader transnational perspective, including academically neglected societies in e.g. Southeast Asia (Kwon 2010). Such a broader cross-cultural perspective gives passage to further transnational comparisons and counteracts culturally essentialist views.

One important transnational aspect also with regard to the Vietnamese context is that media productions under communism often shared the same general functions of

information, education, entertainment and "cultural refinement" (Szostak/Mihelj, 2017, 328) in accordance with the respective party line. We can also assume that media productions about socialist pasts work with similar communist symbolism as temporal and visual markers (Reifova et al. 2013, 207). A third transnational aspect is the international circulation of state media productions among former socialist fraternity states, which means that in terms of content people possibly share certain media experiences.

From the few memory and media appropriation studies conducted in post-socialist contexts, most concern Central and Eastern European societies. In researching collective remembering and media in post-socialist societies, scholars in the field often chose the appropriation of communist-era productions, re-runs and remakes (Szostak/Mihelj 2017; Huxtable 2017; Bardan 2017) and/or media productions set in the socialist past (Reifova et al. 2013) or during war times as their subjects of research. These audience studies on collective memory in post-socialist societies suggest at a more general level that people's life experience with socialism in their countries, the impact of major transitions on their personal lives and social status as well as present memory politics and dominant narratives determine how people engage with and make sense of mediated representations of the past. Reifova and colleagues (2013, 203) point out that mediated popular culture as in a Czech commemorative TV series provides spaces for users to deal with nostalgic memories of a socialist past that are otherwise frowned upon in public after the socio-political changes of 1989. Reifova et al. (2013, 204) argue that the turnover of social systems as it occurred in Central and Eastern Europe qualify as cultural trauma in the sense of Jeffrey Alexander (2004; 2012). In their research, this cultural trauma surfaces in reflected experiences on "new social insecurities brought about by capitalist society", "disruption of biographical/institutional continuity (dislocation) and feelings of embarrassment/stress about life in totalitarian socialism." (Reifova et al. 2013, 214). In times of new uncertainties and insecurities after social-political transitions, people also seek continuity and stability in their mnemonic communication practices. Bardan (2017, 356) argues in her study on Romanian viewers of socialist TV that the popularity of socialist entertainment persists not for its ideological content, but also for people's familiarity and identification with TV characters and the (ritualized) familial reception setting. In a study on Russian and Ukrainian viewers of socialist TV and its remakes, Huxtable (2017, 321) discerns between those who also bemoaned new personal insecurities after the collapse of the Soviet Union and others who benefitted from the fall and stressed newly gained personal freedoms in their (online) discussion of the TV shows.

Empiric studies on media and collective remembering in post-socialist societies further show varying degrees of politicizing and historicizing media content of or about the past. Huxtable (2017, 314-316) observed that some informants interpreted socialist TV (*Kashpirovsky programme*) and its remake ahistorically while others associated it with the time of Perestroika, the demise of state socialism and contesting memories about the time. For Communist popular television after the Prague Spring, Reifova (2015, 86-87) found that some viewers refused to see their past TV experiences as political engagement; others expressed an analytical intent of "studying the enemy" (ibid., 87). Oppositional viewers towards ideological popular TV expressed negative emotions or recalled subversive practices towards the socialist regime and lifestyle (ibid. 89). This varying degree of political interpretation was also found among Polish viewers of communist-era productions about WW II (Szostak/Mihelj 2017). Although some viewers rated these productions as propaganda, they did not always mean it in a negative sense. Some greeted the considered propagandistic productions as an alternate, entertaining form of war memories as compared to family memories (ibid., 333).

Empiric studies on post-socialist societies indicated that people act upon on what they perceive as dominating media narratives about the socialist past. In the wake of building new nations and societies after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many post-socialist societies experienced a critical assessment of their former regimes and lives. Such public critical assessments in remembering socialist pasts can enfold varying social dynamics in engaging with the past, including the formation of nostalgic mnemonic groups (Reifova et al. 2013; Kaun/Stiernstedt 2014), coping or victim groups (Jones 2012) or the persistence of social cleavages based on different experiences made with socialism (Meyen 2013).

Such cleavages become particularly apparent in formerly separated societies during the Cold War. Mihelj (2013, 67) found that in the once separated town of Gorizia at the Italo-Yugoslav border collective memories of socialist solidarity and unity still compete with memories of dictatorship and imprisonment among today's residents. In Germany, Leonhard (2002, 294) detected differences in collective remembering between East and West German informants. She noted that East Germans drew a clearer line between public and private conversations and tended to veil conflicts more than West Germans (ibid.). Meyen (2013, 174) further observed different strategies of social positioning between former GDR and FDR residents in the way they articulated their GDR memories. Former FDR residents distanced themselves from former GDR citizens which they perceived as a suppressed people. Meyen (2013, 174) argued that the remembered image of the GDR

largely depended on the social status of people and how much FDR citizens saw their status threatened in reunified Germany. In reverse, former GDR residents tried to improve their image and status by stressing positive memories of the GDR, criticizing present life conditions (ibid., 179, 184-185) and referring to a lack of knowledge about the ills and injustices of the socialist regime (Meyen 2013, 202). Meyen (2013, 224-226) asserts that such social cleavages between East and West Germans on the basis of post-socialist memories can be maintained across generations while bonds among those two groups strengthen. Another example of such associative social dynamics is illustrated by Sara Jones' (2012) study on a web forum for victims of political violence in the GDR. She found that users easily connected through sharing their traumatic experiences of political persecution online and were able to cope with their agonizing pasts and their legacies. The mnemonic online practices were not confined to the web forum but were also encouraged by offline action, e.g. the search for one's child after forced adoption in the GDR (ibid., 395).

These studies on remembering in post-socialist societies provided empirical evidence that mnemonic communication stirs dynamics of social association and dissociation through narratives and practices. We have seen that in communicating memories as social interaction with media and others, people situate themselves in time, space and in relation to others. Communicating memories can therefore be understood as a process of identification and coping in the aftermath of major socio-political ruptures for individuals and societies as a whole. The studies' findings further suggest that individuals' collective memories and sense-making in post-socialist societies are closely tied to their own experiences with socialism, including political affiliation, established media and communication routines, their own self-assessment of life and social status since socio-political changes took place. Criticism of this strand of research usually concerns memory research's overoccupation with nostalgia in regard to post-socialist societies that could easily leave the impression that citizens e.g. in Eastern Europe engage with their past mainly through modes of yearning for a lost socialist era (Mihelj 2017, 238). Moreover, representational and content studies still outweigh audience research by far (ibid., 236). Therefore more user-centred research is needed in order to explore the various ways in which people engage with collective pasts despite nostalgia. Another imbalance in memory and communication research concerns academia's preoccupation with Western societies (Thussu 2017; Waisbord/Mellado 2014; Gunaratne 2010). In the Southeast Asian context particularly, one needs to rely first and foremost on the accounts of anthropologists and

historians to approach the phenomenon of communicating memories in late socialist societies. The next chapter therefore provides an interdisciplinary overview on media and collective memory in Vietnam. It thus also seeks to contribute to the de-Westernization of the field.

## 4 Media and collective memories in Vietnam

While former post-socialist societies in West, Central and Eastern Europe can be regarded as sharing a Cold War history with Southeast Asian societies and can also be regarded as postwar/-conflict societies, they diverge significantly in two ways in their broader historical trajectories: (1) Southeast Asian societies are post-colonial societies whose socio-political conflicts were also driven by the aim of national sovereignty and independence. (2) While the collapse of the Soviet Union led to regime changes in many former socialist European states, in some Southeast Asian states such as Lao and Vietnam, communist regimes stayed in place despite reforms.

Vietnam—the site of this case study— is therefore often termed as late-socialist society that is yet marked by marketization and globalization since *Doi Moi* ("renovation") reforms in 1986 (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 2). Changes are particularly visible in the urban centres. Singling out a state as research site often evokes criticism of making use of national frameworks as "territorial container" (Hepp 2015, 23-26). In the context of this dissertation, "the nation" is understood in the sense of Benedict Anderson's ([1983] 2006) "imagined communities" and thus as social construct that can constitute a sense of belonging and collectivity. The construct of "the nation" is constructed amongst others through historical narrative, myth-making and the "invention of traditions" (Hobsbawm/Ranger (2008 [1983])). In memory studies, Barbara Misztal (2003, 17) defines nations still as "main mnemonic community", pointing out the concept's persistent significance for collectivity besides families and ethnic communities. The continued relevance of the concept has also been debated at length in Vietnamese studies (Vu 2007). Against the background of Vietnam's (post-)colonial, ruptured and complex history, the meaning of "the nation" as a concept of socially unifying force in (memory) politics (Vu 2007, 212) and the everyday should not be underestimated as Nguyen-Thu (2019, 6) noted:

Decades after the wars, Vietnamese people, young and old, continue to hold on to the idea of the nation as a meaningful form of collective membership that allows them to navigate between the burden of the past the promise of the future. (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 6)

This holding on to "the nation" across generations as indicated by Nguyen-Thu (2019, 6), underlines Bolin's (2017, 96) appeal to take into account not only temporal but also spatial locality when researching memory. Respecting spatial locality in this research endeavour also means to take into account the cultural contexts, in which collective remembering is embedded (Zierold 2006, 55).

That is why the following literature review draws from anthropological, historical, media and social scientific scholarship in order to map the cultural and socio-political characteristics and conditions of communicating memories in Vietnam today and in the past. This mapping includes first, a general overview of mass media, their history and use in Vietnam as socialization agents and sources for appropriating collective memories over time. This contextual knowledge is important since prior research (Volkmer 2006a; Bolin 2017; Finger 2017) already indicated how different media socializations in the form of media routines and access to technologies and content may bring about different patterns of mnemonic communication. The review allows for situating mnemonic communication into the context of everyday media practices in Vietnam. Second, this chapter discusses interdisciplinary memory research on Vietnam and its implications for communicative forms and practices of remembering. Communications research in this particular field and on Vietnam's media environment is generally very scarce (Heng 2002, 3).

#### **4.1 Vietnam's media environment**

No one can ever develop a full knowledge of the past and approximations are necessarily selective. Man's knowledge of the past is limited by information that can be derived from the sources at his disposal. Original accounts of events are never complete; in brutal conflicts, for example records are left only by the survivors. (Shibutani 1966, 159)

Tamotsu Shibutani's (1966) statement above illustrates the necessity of describing media environments, including available technological infrastructure, ways of media production and use, as cultural and socio-political contexts of appropriating collective memories through mass media. While media environments all over the world changed drastically and available sources diversified since then, half a century later, public media institutions and journalism are still considered major mnemonic agents (Zelizer/Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014). The significance and power of institutionalized and established public media seems even more potent in authoritarian states.

Vietnam with its continuous one-party government and state-controlled media creates a peculiar media environment that long has been hardly accessible to Western media scholars (Müller 2008, 242). The present-day media system in Vietnam shows at times arbitrary dynamics between commercialization and regulation, between standardization and individualization, between freedoms and harsh repression (Cain 2014, 97). Despite its strong state regulation, Vietnam's media environment, however, should not be misunderstood as fixed but as one space within a society in constant tremendous transition over the last decades (Tran 2004; Mutz/Klump 2005; Brown 2008).

Despite growing scholarship, Nguyen-Thu (2019, 7-8) criticizes the reductionist nature of those studies that solely focus on power relations, censorship and Vietnam's media struggle for freedom based on Western concepts of media freedom. She advocates a view on media practices that goes beyond the "obedience or rebellion" binary and turns its eyes towards the spaces of "flexibility" (ibid., 8). In response to these academic demands and the vastly changing dynamics of the Vietnamese media environment, it is even more important to focus on how Vietnamese citizens act upon and within their media spaces. The characteristics, opportunities and constraints of these media spaces eventually condition how people communicate memories in everyday Vietnam.

#### 4.1.1 Brief history of mass media in Vietnam

The development of Vietnam's media system dates back to French colonial times of the 19th century. France's colonial expeditions into Vietnamese territory began in 1857 and resulted in the establishment of French colonial rule over three separate regions by the end of the 19th century. The regions Tonkin (north) and Annam (center) were French protectorates while the most southern region of Cochinchina (today parts of South Vietnam and East Cambodia) was a French colony (Taylor 2013, 446-483).

The very first French and Chinese-language newspapers appeared under the colonial administration in Cochinchina that imported the first modern printing press to Vietnam in 1861 (Marr 1998b, 1; Nguyen 1971, 235). The lack of typesets delayed the appearance of Vietnamese-language newspapers. The first Vietnamese newspaper *Gia-Dinh Bao* ("Gia-Dinh Journal") was not published until 1865. It was founded by Truong Vinh Ky, an intellectual and considered first professional Vietnamese journalist (Nguyen 1971, 236; Panol/Do 2000, 464). Despite the subsequent publication of further Vietnamese periodicals, also in the French protectorates such as Tonkin (e.g. *Dai Viet Tan Bao* - "New Newspaper of Great Vietnam"), most of the newspapers served as instruments for the

interests of the colonial regime: French citizens or Vietnamese with French citizenship ran the majority of publications. French-language periodicals also received legal privileges. Vietnamese newspapers did not establish in the colonial publishing sector until the turn of the century (Marr 1998b, 1). Generally, the newspaper market during French colonial rule was characterized by high fluctuation. Newspapers were often brief and of poor quality (Nguyen 1971, 237). With the emergence of political-nationalist movements in Vietnam within the period of 1920-1940 and the formation of oppositional forces against the colonial regime, a nationalist local press emerged (e.g. *La Cloche Felee* in 1924, *Tieng Dan* in 1927) (Panol/Do 2000, 465).

During WW II, the structure of the Vietnamese press changed along with the political currents in Vietnam at the time. The press landscape during this time period was first affected by the National Socialist Vichy regime in France, then Japanese occupation. On September 2, 1945, after Japanese surrender, communist leader Ho Chi Minh proclaimed national independence and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi. This event also dominated the first official radio broadcast aired by the DRV's state broadcaster *Dai Tieng Noi Viet Nam* ("Voice of Vietnam", VOV) (still existing today) with the help of old French technology (Nguyen 1998, 65). In North Vietnam, the reach of radio broadcasts was further increased via a mainly urban megaphone network (Panol/Do 2000, 470). During this time, the communist press gained greater influence in Vietnam (Nguyen 1971, 238). Despite a steady growth in publications, however, the Vietnamese press system continued to be ruptured and unstable after 1945. In 1946, the Ho Chi Minh government in Hanoi founded the first Vietnamese news agency *Thong Tan Xa Viet Nam* ("Vietnamese News Agency", VNA) still existing today (ibid., 467).

During the First Indochina War (1946-1954), newspapers were still scarce on the market as the DRV's resources were spent on armament and mobilization during the colonial war (ibid., 466). The early 1950s, however, also saw the emergence of the Vietnamese cinema and film industry with the establishment of the first national film studio in the DRV in 1953 and an emerging domestic film industry in Saigon (Lam 2013, 159; Marr 1998b, 7). Not recognizing the DRV as an independent state in the north of Vietnam, the French government founded the internationally recognized State of Vietnam (1949-1955) under Vietnam's last emperor Bao Dai (Taylor 2013, 547). The state's leadership created the first Vietnamese Ministry of Information in 1949 (Panol/Do 2000, 467). In the south of Vietnam, politico-religious newspapers by politicized sects such as the "Hoa Hao" or "Cao Dai" emerged besides the monarch-critical "Vietnam Press" (VNP) and the *Vietnam Thong*

*Tan Xa* ("Vietnam Press") (ibid.). In the south, *Võ Tuyen Vietnam* (VTVN, "Radio Vietnam") went on air in 1950 and was initially still under French control (ibid., 469).

After the end of the First Indochina War and the division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel according to the Geneva Agreement of 1954, two states established in Vietnam and both developed different media systems. In the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) under Ho Chi Minh, the communist press functioned as an ideological instrument of the state apparatus. Besides news on current national developments, its content also dealt with national history and traditional culture (Tran 1982, 391). Motion pictures supported the DRV's propaganda extensively since the late 1950s (Marr 1998b, 7). In the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), proclaimed by US-backed Ngo Dinh Diem in 1955, an authoritarian press system evolved. It was characterized by strong regulation and repression (Nguyen Thai 1971, 240), but also by investigative reporting, e.g. on governmental corruption (Panol/Do 2000, 467). In the wake of the Second Indochina War (1964-75), radio broadcasting predominantly served propagandistic interests of both states, the DRV and the RVN. The South Vietnamese broadcaster *The Voice of Freedom* (VoF) targeted the North Vietnamese population while the DRV's station *Radio Giai Phong* also addressed Vietnamese audiences in the RVN. US military broadcasting reached out to military personnel stationed in the RVN. (ibid., 470). The government stations in Hanoi and Saigon long held the monopoly for the playing of music until Japanese tape recorders and transistor radios arrived the markets in the South (Marr 1998b, 9-10).

The development of infrastructure for television broadcasting was mainly realized through US investments in major cities of the RVN such as Saigon (today Ho Chi Minh City) and Hue. The first television program on THVN (*Truyen hinh Viet Nam*) Channel 9 went on air from Saigon in February 1966 (Hoffer/Lichty 1978, 98-99). The RVN film industry at the same time saw the vast import of Hollywood movies besides own domestic productions of feature films, entertainment movies and propagandistic documentaries (Marr 1998b, 7). In the DRV, TV infrastructure was built by the support of other socialist states, including the GDR (Lichty/Hoffer 1978, 117). Due to US bombardments of North Vietnam further television development was often interrupted and delayed in the DRV. The first television program aired in September 1970 (Panol/Do 2000, 471). TV was broadcasted on two nights a week. While in the DRV about only 1,000 television sets were available in public spaces (Lichty/Hoffer 1978, 117), television in the RVN already reached about 75% of the population in the early 1970s. 40% of RVN citizens already owned a television set, usually watching in groups (Hoffer/Lichty 1978, 108-109). In the south, entertainment made up

the bulk of TV content, but also "aimed to help audiences remember war and the need for sacrifice." (ibid., 106) In the north, TV programming focused on education and health (Lichty/Hoffer 1978, 118).

The end of the Second Indochina War with the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 established communist rule in South Vietnam. The formal unification took place in 1976 with the foundation of today's the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). The unification required the integration of both former media systems.

From the country's unification until renovation (1976-1986), mass media including the press were centrally subsidized and controlled by the state; wages for journalists were low (Ho 1998, 58). Ho (ibid.) described the character of the Vietnamese press as "a one-sided conversation", presenting only "the best and brightest aspects of society, illustrated with examples of the 'good man and the good act'." Topics covered in the HCMC press in the post-war period were e.g.

[...] socialist-realist themes of heroism, resolute defence, bold industrialisation, collectivisation of agriculture, elimination of the traces of the old society and celebrations of the national holidays of fraternal socialist nations. (Taylor 2001, 56)

Despite the social and economic hardships during Vietnam's political isolation and subsidy period (*thoi bao cap*, 1975-1986) and ongoing violent conflicts in the border regions with Cambodia (Cambodian-Vietnamese War, 1978-1979) and China (Sino-Vietnamese War, 1979), the press in Vietnam avoided critical reporting given the political affiliation of many papers (Ho 1998, 59).

Television air times also remained limited during that time and TV content dealt predominantly with news and current affairs (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 2). Consumer culture and commodities that were present before in the South were denounced as "'neo-colonial poisons' (*noc doc thuc dan moi*)" and an immoral threat to the "revolutionary spirit" (Taylor 2001, 32). That also included cultural products such as "music of the former regime" (*am nhac cua che do cu*)" (ibid., 39) which described music composed in Vietnam before DRV rule and in the South between 1954 and 1975 (e.g. *nhac vang*) as well as foreign music from non-socialist countries (ibid.). Taylor (2001a, 39) described how popular media, particularly music, of the South were systematically destroyed and banned after unification.

Tapes, records and printed musical scores were systematically collected from private homes and commercial establishments and destroyed in campaigns to eliminate these 'cultural vestiges' (*di tich van hoa*) of the former South. Any kind of performance of such pieces was banned and could earn one serious penalties. The state took control of the broadcasting of music on television, radio and in public venues and controlled the repertoires of public

performances. Such policies remained active until the early 1980s, when a gradual relaxation was reported. (Taylor 2001, 39).

The Vietnamese film industry was long known as "war cinema" (Ngo 1998, 91) since many movie productions dealt with Vietnam's times of conflict, presenting ideological content such as "stereotypical heroes full of self-sacrifice, honour and righteousness" (ibid., 95). Communist leadership usually considered cinema a tool "[...] to foster patriotism and national pride and to boost morale." (ibid., 91) Since the late 1970s, film maker Dang Nhat Minh's work is recognized for adding new qualities to Vietnamese cinema with more complex, partly ironic, perspectives on war and post-unification (Ngo 1998, 92).

#### 4.1.2 Mass media and media change in Vietnam since Doi Moi

The implementation of economic reforms in Vietnam in 1986 marked the *Doi Moi* ("renovation") era of the country. In the media sector, state subsidies ceased and resulted in more competition and consideration of audience interests (Müller 2008, 248). The reforms led to some extent to the loosening of previous ideological constraints (Nguyen 1992, 2) but also fostered commercialization and corruption (Tran 2002, 238). In the aftermath of *Doi Moi*, Vietnam's media system experienced a media boom in the 1990s, particularly on the print market (ibid., 239) and in popular television (Nguyen 2019, 2).

The Vietnamese newspaper and magazine market is characterized by steady growth, differentiation and dynamism. McKinley (2011, 89) described a two-tier system for the fully state-owned print sector: (1) such news organizations which serve as propaganda organs for the government and the state and (2) an elite layer, which tries to achieve editorial independence through financial independence. Revenues from circulation and advertising dropped due to the rapidly growing online market in recent years (ibid., 91). According to the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) there were 748 printed titles in June 2012 (Le 2013, 93). Among the highest-circulation daily newspapers are the Communist Party's newspaper *Nhan Dan* (180,000), *Tuoi Tre* (400,000), *Cong An Thanh Pho Ho Chi Minh* (400,000), *An Ninh The Gioi* (380,000) and *Thanh Nien* (250,000) published in HCMC (McKinley 2011, 95). With the advent of the Internet by the late 1990s, editorial offices began to establish their websites and pure online newspapers appeared (Le 2013, 93). There are increasing efforts in the print sector to integrate new technologies such as mobile services. Some media companies are also entering other economic sectors such as real estate in order to tap additional sources of income (McKinley 2011, 89, 96).

While radio was a major medium before *Doi Moi*, the state radio station VOV faced major challenges with liberal market reforms and more open competition on the media market, particularly with television becoming an affordable and popular medium in the 1990s (Nguyen 1998, 66-67). Until today, VOV's program is state-funded (with some advertising revenue) and obligated to distribute the Party line and information on state policies (ibid., 64-69). Its programming also reaches out to the Vietnamese diaspora worldwide.

Television is considered to be a relatively young medium in Vietnam. Although state television *Dai Truyen Hinh Viet Nam* ("Vietnam Television", VTV) broadcasted from Hanoi since 1970, nationwide transmissions did not exist until 1991 (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 2). After *Doi Moi*, television in Vietnam spread rapidly. Greater availability of TV technology, broadcasting hours and diversity in content sparked the popularity of the medium among Vietnamese. TV entertainment formats gained most popularity in a previously political and news content-dominated mediascape (ibid.). Besides many regional stations throughout the country, today national state TV offers nine national channels, including a news channel (VTV1), a science channel (VTV2), an entertainment channel (VTV3) and an international channel (VTV4) (VTV 2020).

The Vietnamese film industry after *Doi Moi* also gained in freedom and creativity, experimenting with social criticism and different forms of cinematic expression (Ngo 1998, 93). Until 1989, the film industry was entirely subsidized by the state. After renovation, the Ministry of Culture and Information issued licences for more than 30 film studios (in addition to state-owned studios) that had to gather their own funding and were partially affiliated with political mass organizations (ibid.). Resources for film-production in the beginning of the 1990s stemmed mainly from private investments, leading to the emergence of a commercial film industry that attracted large audiences. These so-called "instant noodles" productions were mostly low-budget, entertainment movies produced in HCMC (ibid.). Counteracting this commercial trend, the state introduced subsidies for movies again (Ngo 1998, 94).

After pioneering attempts in academia in the early 1990s, Vietnam officially adopted the Internet in late 1997 (Dang 2001, 199-204). For a post-war, predominantly rural society that had just recently seen the wide spread of television, the advent of the Internet was a tremendous change. By the time of this study's fieldwork in 2015, Internet penetration in Vietnam was at 50.8% (Internet Live Stats 2016) with the urban areas usually accounting for higher figures (FIDH/VCHR 2013, 6). By the time of writing, it reached an estimated 65% with 63.6 million Internet users (Statista Research Department 2020). Mobile Internet

became an immensely large growth sector in Vietnam (Parker et al. 2013, 116). Earl (2013, 85) further noted the emergence of "print, online and television lifestyle media in urban Vietnam that caters to a growing urban middle class, whose interests centre on consumption, leisure and entertainment." While their style and content appears new, their representations of social roles also continue to draw from values of a socialist past (ibid., 94; Drummond 2003, 158). Despite some continuities Vietnam's media market clearly diversified with the arrival of new entertainment and lifestyle formats, onlines (news) sites and also by the emergence of a flourishing blogosphere and communities on SNS (McKinley 2011, 95). Particularly critical actors in Vietnam's public sphere, however, pose a new challenge to the state's strong media regulation.

Media regulation and its control measures relaxed to some extent after *Doi Moi* with Vietnamese media having "[n]either full autonomy nor complete censorship" (Sidel 1998, 97). More recent studies and human rights reports, however, criticize that self-censorship, state press briefings and the repression of non-compliant journalists such as bloggers are still common (McKinley 2011, 89; FIDH/VCHR 2013). The government's dealings with the media and the press is arbitrary and ambivalent (Cain 2014, 87). Vietnamese print media are usually under supervision of an "organisation of the party, the state or the military." (Earl 2013, 87). While the Vietnamese constitution officially grants freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Article 69, this right is compromised by other legislations that prioritize national interests (Muppidi/Pradhan 2012, 439). Further, in a publication law of 1993, which regarded publishing as a part of cultural, ideological and national activities, Article 22 explicitly prohibited the publication of materials that distorted history or revolutionary achievements or discredited the successes of national heroes (Panol/Do 2000, 472). Although there is no pre-censorship of reporting or editorial texts by state authorities, the the Ministry of Information and Communications (MIC) instructs editors in weekly meetings (McKinley 2011, 96; expert interviews 2015).

Internet regulation in Vietnam has again tightened in recent years by state legislation (Kurfürst 2015, 134). In 2013, the government issued Decree No. 72/2013/ND-CP that regulates the operation, provision and use of online services. The supplementary Decree 174 of 2014 granted state authorities additional powers to take action against criticism of the state and government online (ibid.). Several amendments followed that forced media producers online to delete considered law-violating content (Kurfürst 2015, 134) or big online companies such as Facebook and Google to save and deliver user data to the government (epd 2018). Such media regulations limit and threaten the population's

opportunities for empowerment and participation in political and social processes online. Given this development of Vietnamese mass media and its regulation, how do people in Vietnam make use of media technologies in the everyday? I will approach this question in the following subchapter.

### 4.1.3 Media use in Vietnam

Reviewing the trajectories of Vietnamese media and the media system's main characteristics mapped cornerstones of media spaces that people in Vietnam grew up with and have acted within. For exploring the phenomenon of communicating memories in Vietnam, however, more insights on Vietnamese media users and their practices are necessary.

We know from previous scholarship that there has been a urban-rural, class and gender divide regarding media infrastructure and media preferences in Vietnam. Dang (2008, 168-169) found a gender gap in overall media use with men using more media devices and more frequently than women. This gap was greater than in comparable data from Western societies (*ibid.*). Moreover, members of the Vietnamese urban middle class generally have better access to a greater variety of new and old media, including international ones (Gainsborough 2012, 42). Whereas educated urbanites preferred the printed press for a long time, rural populations favoured radio (Müller 2008, 258). Both media eventually ranked behind television that became the most popular and most intensively used medium for information and entertainment nationwide in the late 1990s to 2000s (*ibid.*). The arrival of a great range of novel television programming in the late 1990s, including game shows, reality shows and lifestyle programs, created a whole new everyday media experience for Vietnamese viewers (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 57). Until then, TV audiences in Vietnam had only seen news and current affairs programs (*ibid.*, 60). By the mid-2000s, almost every family owned at least one television set (Müller 2008, 258). Watching TV at that time did not seem to be a question of social status anymore (King et al. 2008, 802). Generally, media were often accessed and consumed in a group context (Müller 2008, 283-284). This collective or group-oriented media use has been considered a cultural characteristic of Vietnamese audiences historically rooted in Confucian influences and values (Parker et al. 2013, 115; Jamieson 1995). Many families watch TV news and entertainment shows together particularly during dinner (Dang 2008, 173). For most Vietnamese families the evening dinner is the most important and sometimes only familial gathering of the day (*ibid.*).

By the 2000s, Vietnamese youth audiences were particularly interested in watching news, movies and music (King et al. 2008, 802) While among the young urban population

newspapers and magazines were still read for national, international, sport and celebrity news (ibid., 803), radio use declined drastically (Dang 2008, 102). Urban youth increasingly preferred the Internet over television when information about an event is needed quickly (Hoang 2013, 63). Particularly young women multi-tasked in their media use with TV becoming a sideline medium (ibid.).

Vietnamese citizens' Internet use was further boosted by the great use of mobile phones and smartphone. In 2011, mobile phone registrations were almost double the population of the country (Muppidi/Pradhan 2012, 437). Smartphones now offer cheap, mobile and flexible services with a huge variety of applications for information and social communication (McKinley 2011, 96-100). In 2011, market research data showed that 66% of Vietnamese used the Internet daily and on average 130 minutes a day. They went online mainly for news, search engines, music and information search for work or school (Cimigo 2012). At that time, Internet use was particularly frequent in the metropolitan areas of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, yet most often used at home (Cimigo 2012). Recent quantitative data showed an exponential increase of the Internet usage in Vietnam. On average, Vietnamese used the Internet about 7 hours a day in 2018 and mostly accessed it on their mobile devices (Statista Research Department 2020). Watching videos and using messengers were the most frequent activities. Facebook, Youtube and the Vietnamese messenger app Zalo were the most popular networks used by 90% of all Internet users aged 16-64 (ibid.). The latter suggests that the use of SNS also cuts across age groups of Internet users and is not a phenomenon among young Vietnamese only. Given the variety of resources available but persisting editorial controls, the Vietnamese news industry's credibility dwindles among readers (McKinley 2011, 89). While the figures do not reveal insights on the content and actors Vietnamese users engage with, we can assume that media use in Vietnam diversified and individualized drastically since the 2000s.

The overview on Vietnam's media system and use presented an environment that has been marked by French colonial rule, ideological and structural divides during the Cold War and Second Indochina War, by state subsidies and control after unification as well as partial liberation and commercialization after economic reforms. The historical trajectories of Vietnam's media environment, social class and gender conditioned different media socializations and use patterns. In which ways is Vietnam's conflictual past represented in this media environment and how do Vietnamese remember collectively through their everyday media use? The next subchapter presents an overview on state media's construction of collective memories in Vietnam and the meaning of collective

remembering in Vietnamese everyday culture in order to provide more specific context and insights on forms and practices of communicating memories in Vietnam.

## **4.2 Constructing collective memories in Vietnam: Between memory politics and everyday practices**

The introduction to Vietnam's media environment sketched the different trajectories and characteristics of media development, regulation and use in the country over the last decades as broader context of the mediation of collective memories. It touched upon the dynamics between political institutions, media actors and citizens. This chapter shifts the focus from the general media environment to collective memories as particular outcomes of these actors' communicative actions in that very environment. The perspective therefore specifies in looking at the processes of constructing powerful representations and narratives about the past in Vietnam. Which themes and narratives about the past are visible and which ones are not? Which policies, cultural characteristics and social conventions are at work in these processes?

After reviewing first the socio-political context on official collective memory in Vietnam, the chapter turns secondly to everyday perspectives of collective remembering in Vietnam. It explores the manifestation of cultural traditions and rituals such as ancestor worship as an integral part of everyday family, cultural and social life in Vietnam. Looking at these socio-political and everyday contexts shall provide a better understanding of which knowledge, representations and narratives about the past are publicly shared, socially accepted, politically encouraged and offered for engagement on the one hand and which everyday practices inform these engagements with collective pasts on the other hand. Finally, the review examines how these engagements navigate social relations within the family, social groups, between the state and its citizens.

### **4.2.1 Socio-political context: Official public memory and memory politics in Vietnam**

The public visibility of memoryscapes in Vietnam is neither rare nor subtle (Schwenkel 2017, 26). Scholars remarked that the country has nearly become "a memorial ground in itself" (Li-Lian 2001, 383) and represents "hyper-mnemosiis" (Tai 2001b, 8), a tendency to cling on the past. Often these visible markers such as statues, memorials or museums are part of a larger agenda of memory politics. The history of Vietnam shows that every political regime usually has its own interests and agenda in memory politics. People are

presented different knowledge and dominant narratives about the past depending on when, where and how they grew up. It is therefore also necessary to historicize memory politics throughout different regimes in Vietnam. Since state institutions are largely responsible for contemporary memory politics in Vietnam this chapter concentrates more on the communist party organizations' memory politics than on the RVN regimes'. The central instruments of memory politics considered here are the standardization of historiography and history education, establishing a commemorative personality cult, holidays and cultural rites as well as the dissemination of ideological commemorative or anniversary news and entertainment media into everyday social and cultural life.

#### 4.2.1.1 *History of memory politics in Vietnam*

Founding "a new collective memory" (Pelley 2002, 20) and rewriting the past became part of the communist government's political decolonization and nation-building agenda in the DRV (*ibid.*, 7). This postcolonial agenda was not limited to the political realm but sought to pervade people's everyday lives. The DRV leadership aimed at "a moral transformation of society" that was in line with cultural traditions and adaptable to the social reality of the Vietnamese people on the one hand and with international communist ideology and political interests of the party on the other hand (Tréglodé 2012, 2). Their memory politics therefore picked up pre-historic myths and heroic role models and drew from ancient cultural traditions such as ancestor worship. At the same time these strategies encompassed alterations in (1) representations of Vietnamese history as well as in (2) cultural and commemorative rites in order to push new values and social norms in the effort to implement socialism in society (Großheim 2010, 161).

Through lavish commemorative events, changes in the visual cues and symbols of everyday life and information presented in textbooks and public schools a new sense of the past – crystallized and condensed in memorable bits – was instilled in people. (Pelley 2002, 6-7).

(1) To create such a new sense of collective memory, the DRV leadership and party officials started to direct historiography (Pelley 2002, 7), encouraged "Viet-centric" perspectives, focused on particular events or "crystallizations" (*ibid.*, 11-19) and omitted others in the representations of history.

Two major foundational myths for example served in the DRV to claim Vietnamese national identity and decolonize Vietnamese history: the Hung Kings and the Dong Son culture. Myths surrounding the bronze-age Dong Son culture were revitalized in the DRV to claim a Vietnamese national identity that pre-dated the time of Chinese rule in the country (111 BC-939 AD) (Marr 2002, 15). The government in Hanoi used archeological

discoveries to "symbolize timeless Vietnamese patriotism and resistance to foreign aggression" (ibid.). The Hung Kings represent a dynasty that is said to have constituted the first Vietnamese kingdom "Van Lang" west of the Red River delta (Malarney 2007, 531-532). Already the predecessor of the CPV, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) portrayed itself as immediate offspring of the Hung Kings. Their mythological dynasty sets the starting point for what is generally perceived as 4000 years of Vietnamese history (Tréglodé 2012, 14). The government of the DRV sought to historicize them and strip them off what were considered religious and superstitious beliefs (Dror 2017, 126). The Hung Kings were not only to symbolize "a prehistoric tradition of [...] fighting for the country" but also "the ancestors of all Vietnamese in both the North and the South", covering up previous separations and fractures in Vietnamese history (ibid.). In the DRV, revitalizing such myths about ancestral role models and creating a new historical canon were part of a more general agenda to emphasize historical Vietnamese unity (Dror 2017, 148) and national resistance (Pelley 2002, 8) in times of national separation.

In order to strengthen such master narratives of Vietnamese unity and enduring "fighting spirit" (Pelley 2002, 22), official historians in the DRV were advised to tell history in a chronological, linear and evolutionary manner (ibid., 9). This kind of sequential linking of historical events created a "geneology of heroic resistance wars against foreign powers" (Kwon 2006, 4). The establishment and conventionalization of such narratives often coincided with a simplification of historical facts, e.g. as in the depiction of the First Indochina War as "Anti-French Resistance War" (1946-1954) or as in the binary use of labels such as "revolutionaries and reactionaries" (Pelley 2002, 3).

Such historical master narratives of nationalism, patriotism and anticolonialism were also implemented and propagated through history education and mass media in postcolonial Vietnam. School curricula, including history lessons, became "highly politicized" and ideological, promoting socialism, communism, love for the party and its leaders (Dror 2018, 70). Establishing its own publishing house in 1957, the Ministry of Education gained control over textbook distribution and content that stressed revolutionary values and later integrated war propaganda (ibid., 78-79). In contrast, the RVN's educational system excluded politics from schools and allowed for more plurality, diversity and individual freedoms (ibid., 112). The implementation of socialism in the DRV also stretched across the whole cultural sector, including fine arts, literature and film (Großheim 2010, 161). DRV authorities for example started to advocate the aesthetics of social realism and revolutionary paintings, "conveying ideals of the proletarian class" and nationalism (Taylor

2001, 111). Moreover, revolutionary memoirs (*hoi ky cach mang*) became established as a popular literary genre in the 1950s (Zinoman 2001, 21).

In the postcolonial era in the DRV, such master narratives and representations of history stood for virtuous events, actions and people that all conflated in a specific conception of Vietnamese heroism as the model for society, social order and the socio-political relationship between the state and its citizens (Tréglodé 2012, 1-13). For centuries, people in Vietnam paid tribute to exemplary subjects and accepted their subjection according to Confucian principles of a harmonious, hierarchical society (*ibid.*, 13). The relationship of the hero as an example of good mankind with his rulers and ancestral land was one of great loyalty. "The hero was a sort of barometer for patriotic virtue and was connected to his nation by a filial link." (Tréglodé 2012, 13). The idea of the nation then, however, went beyond the physical space and would also be associated with the spiritual world of heroic ancestors (*ibid.*, 14).

Tacking on these traditional beliefs, the DRV started a campaign on redefining the "exemplary society" and patriotism based on political virtue. As part of the programme the state named 148 "new heroes" between 1950 and 1964 (Tréglodé 2012, 2) and provided its own ideological definition of a hero:

The hero is oriented towards the party, dedicated to serving the people. [...] Most heroes are workers and peasants. For the good of the masses, the hero is a dedicated volunteer, exemplary in production and labour. The hero follows the political line of the Vanguard Party and the government. [...] The hero has a revolutionary spirit, initiatives, knowledge and a new discipline that stems from a rich experience derived from contact with the masses. [...] He is selfless and has a responsible attitude towards leaders and the masses. His participation in the struggle and in production is not driven by individual interests but by a collective one. (Truong Chinh [1952] as cited in Tréglodé 2012, 28-29)

Ho Chi Minh as communist leader and later president of the DRV (1955-1969) symbolized perfectly all characteristics of the new hero in the DRV: disciplined, virtuous, selfless and dedicated to the just cause of the revolution and filial piety towards the nation (Tréglodé 2012, 33-34). During his life time, he himself nurtured the personality cult surrounding his personage that lasts until today (Tai 1995, 274). Worshipping national heroes among the living and the dead as well as considered martyrs that sacrificed their lives during the First Indochina War for the "Vietnamese Revolution" was connected to particular (2) commemorative and cultural practices. Culturally deeply rooted practices such as commemorating the dead also became subject of memory politics in the DRV.

Kwon (2006, 104) argued that "[i]magining the nation-state became a matter of thinking about dead war heroes within the familiar system of ancestor worship." Remembering and worshipping the ancestors (*nho on*) is "one of the most basic moral responsibilities of all

Vietnamese" (Malarney 2007, 521-522). This cultural practice created the basis for implementing the official commemoration of exemplary men and women into people's everyday lives in the DRV. The memorial personality cult of considered revolutionary martyrs (*liet sy*) and heroes (*anh hung*) started to become institutionalized by law with Ho Chi Minh's decree of 1947 that arranged financial state support for war casualties and their families. On July 27th of the same year, the commemorative "Day for War Casualties" was established (2016, (Großheim 2016, 7). Local officials began to perform at funerals to show the state's gratitude for the martyrs' efforts (Malarney 2001, 47, 55-58). Besides new civic rites, commemorating the war dead was also integrated into existing familial rituals such as weddings and practiced through secular rites such as erecting statues (ibid. 2007, 521-524). In this regard, official civic and familial commemoration already became closely intertwined. The institutionalization of a death cult in the 1950s generally legitimized the death of war victims of the First Indochina War (Malarney 2001, 46). It also, however, established a system of social stratification. So-called "martyr families" (*gia dinh liet sy*) became socio-economically advantaged but the status was only granted depending on a casualty's revolutionary efforts, circumstances of death and loyalty to the Party (Großheim 2016, 8-10). Significantly, gender did not play a role in granting heroic and martyr statuses (Malarney 2007, 519; Tai 2001c, 173). Reorganizing commemorative rites and practices for national heroes in the DRV was considered to be part of the state's mandate to educate people about the traditions of their common ancestors (Malarney 2007, 525). Meanwhile other cultural practices such as the organization of particular spiritual festivals were suppressed between the 1950s and late 1980s (ibid., 515, 521).

While the establishment of particular narratives and representations of history and commemorative practices focused on consolidating the new communist leadership's power in the DRV after 1945, during the Second Indochina War (1964-1975) memory politics and history were largely instrumentalized to catalyze wide public support for the "War of National Salvation Against the Americans" (Tai 2001b, 4), legitimize again more war dead (Malarney 2001, 46) and the revolutionary cause for "national liberation and socialist revolution" (Bradley 2001, 197). After the end of the officially considered "sacred war" (*chien tranh than thanh*) (ibid.) in 1975, commemorative practices were largely centralized and controlled by the government of the unified country (Tai 1995, 273; Kwon 2006, 4). This brief overview on some of the politics of remembering in the DRV, including the establishment of historical master narratives, the revival of national myths and the institutionalization of commemorative practices of heroic figures and war dead, showed

how the state sought influence on collective remembering in Vietnamese everyday lives. By encouraging particular mnemonic practices and presenting particular knowledge about the past, people were supposed to be morally educated and become loyal to the socialist state and its goals. What, however, remained of these DRV memory policies in the unified post-reform Vietnam?

#### 4.2.1.2 *Memory politics in post-Reform Vietnam*

The inscription of myths, even fabricated stories, the emphasis and entanglement of particular historical episodes and the repetitive dissemination of unidimensional master narratives of history and their instrumentalization in politics, education and media forged a sense of nationalism, patriotism and community throughout different stages in Vietnam's history. Until today, these means of memory politics present a way of positive self-representation of the Communist Party (Giebel 2001, 77) and tools to legitimize its rule (Mensel 2013, 134) in times of declining economic growth rates, increasing dissatisfaction over corruption by the population and recurring tensions over Sino-Vietnamese relations—contemporary issues that evoke sentiments of uncertainty, distrust and destabilization in society.

While economic reforms (*Doi Moi*) and digitization paved the way for new, more liberal and plural forms and practices of remembering (Großheim 2016, 34), present official historiography and history education in Vietnam is still state-led and foregrounds established master narratives, heroic figures and events. Such publicly salient and celebrated events include e.g. the victory over the French colonial regime in Dien Bien Phu 1954 (Marr 2000, 12), victory over the US and the considered liberation of South Vietnam in 1975. The events of the 2nd Indochina War that were often described as a war between "the 'Vietnamese People' (*Nhan dan Viet Nam*) and 'foreign aggressors' (*xam luoc ngoai quoc*)" (Taylor 2001, 29) by DRV leaders are today still embedded in an “orthodox master narrative” of the “just war”, national “struggle against foreign aggressors” (Großheim 2010, 155), "the national struggle for liberation" (Margara 2012, 12), the "fight against imperialism" (Schwenkel 2009, 6) and "reunification" (Großheim 2018, 156). These narratives represent official, linear narrations dominated by perspectives of the communist leadership (Tai 2001b, 4). Official national historiography particularly focuses on military successes and often parallels with the Communist Party's history (Giebel, 2004, xviii). By stressing and omitting particular historical episodes, state-led memory politics provide a positive, stable and reliable image of the party that focuses on its efforts in the historical process at large.

This positive image is pushed and maintained even further by sustaining the personality cult surrounding national heroes, most significantly Ho Chi Minh. The state nurtured this cult particularly after his death in 1969 and after unification (Tai 1995, 274). Until today, his personality is widely visible and publicly celebrated as the "Uncle to the whole nation" (Tai 1995, 274), the "father of the Vietnamese Revolution" (ibid., 275) and "natural successor of the nation's heroic ancestors" (Tréglodé 2012, 11). Personal denominations as such still suggest a familial relationship between the former political leader and contemporary Vietnamese citizens. Tai (1995, 273) pointed out that the cult of Ho Chi Minh today

[...] is both an economic activity and an attempt at symbolic control [...] between different actors in society. These resulting different ways of commemorating Ho yet draw more from the oral history and pre-historic myths of national heroes than socialist traditions. (ibid., 287)

Other prominent national heroes still commemorated today for their achievements in fighting foreign armies include the Trung Sisters, Tran Hung Dao, Le Loi (Malarney 2001, 47-48) or Ho's successor Ton Duc Thang (Giebel 2001, 2004). Again, female figures such as mythological Fairy Au Co, progenitor of the Hung Kings, Lady Trieu or the Dong Loc girls as more contemporary war martyrs are well presented among considered national heroes (Li-Lian 2001, 384-387). In 1994, the SRV government even institutionalized the honorary title of "Vietnamese Heroic Mother" (*Bà mẹ Việt Nam Anh hùng*) by law (Tai 2001c, 180-181; Thai et al. 2011). Also, entire villages gained heroic titles (Kwon 2006, 113).

The commemoration and celebration of considered heroes and martyrs again usually coincide with heroic master narratives of liberation, resistance, sacrifice and patriotism (Tai 2001c, 172; Mensel 2013, 130; Margara 2012). While heroic and victorious representations dominate, official state narratives as represented in public museums also include narratives of suffering and victimization told e.g. through the oppression of Vietnamese by French colonial rulers or the late consequences of the use of Agent Orange (Li-Lian 2001, 388). The recurring icons of mother and child usually also symbolize family separation and grief, but also nurturance and care (Li-Lian 2001, 384).

The memorial personality cult of revolutionary martyrs and heroes takes various forms and practices such as institutionalized policies (honorary titles and awards, searching for bodies missing in action) (Kwon 2006, 113), holidays with related commemorative practices, memorials (e.g. on cemeteries, see Malarney 2001, 67; Großheim 2016) or festivals (Malarney 2007). The personality and death cult incorporated in state-led commemorations is usually secular-oriented (Giebel 2001, 85). At communal level, however, practices can also attain "semi-religious" character (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 435; Giebel 2001, 2004),

corresponding with central cultural and religious mnemonic practices such as the celebration of death anniversaries, the faith in the tutelary spirit dating back to the 13th century (Tréglodé 2012, 11) and ancestor worship (Fermi 2014; Kwon 2006, 113). Often considered heroes are attributed supernatural powers that are believed to persist in the spirit realm. These practices experienced a "ritual revival" in Vietnam after Doi Moi (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433; Jellema 2007). Therefore the boundaries between practices are not always clear cut. They often transcend boundaries of the religious, the cultural, the social, the political, the private and the public.

The official commemoration of revolutionary dead in post-reform Vietnam stands in stark contrast to the non-existence of public commemoration practices for dead soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) (Malarney 2001, 67; Li-Lian 2001, 392; Großheim 2016; Nguyen 2016). Although commemorative monuments and cemeteries also existed in the RVN, these were largely removed after unification in 1975 (Malarney 2001, 67). These policies created longterm-effects on public debates within different regions of Vietnam: while Northern debates revolve around the commemoration of the revolutionary dead, there is a greater awareness in the South about those who cannot officially or publicly remembered (Leshkovich 2008, 6).

The state tried to sustain the here reviewed thematic focus on particular events, heroic figures and narratives in public memory while silencing others. In most cases the neglect or omission of themes relate to sensitive historical topics and episodes that have not been reappraised yet. That includes periods of foreign rule such as the one by China or Japanese occupation (Marr 1984, 285), contested atrocities, military conflicts and killings such as the near elimination of the Cham (*ibid.*), the land reform (1953-1956) (Großheim 2018, 155), the killings in Hue during the Tet Offensive (1968) (Li-Lian 2001, 395), Vietnam's military interventions in Cambodia (1978-1979) and the border conflict with China in 1979 (Großheim 2016, 28; *ibid.* 2018). Moreover, the death of civilians in the Second Indochina War as in Ha My or My Lai has been long neglected in national memory (Kwon 2006, 20). Further omissions on the official side refer to achievements of historical figures claimed to be traitors such as Phan Than Gian (1796-1867) or to be feudal oppressors such as the Nguyen dynasty (Tai 1998, 196), activities by Ho Chi Minh as a Comintern agent in the 1930s, the suppression of intellectuals criticizing the land reform in 1956 (Nhan Van-Giai Pham affair) (Zinoman 2016), the Anti-Revisionist affair of the 1960s (Marr 2000).

The history of the Republic of Vietnam (1955-1975) has been rarely presented beyond its denunciation as "American puppet regime" (Großheim 2016, 27) and as "backwards"

(Taylor 2001, 26). Official public memory further neglects non- or anti-Communist figures, including anti-colonial movements in the South (Tai 1998, 197-198), the discrimination and reeducation of parts of the former RVN population (Leshkovich 2008, 33), the flight of more than a million Vietnamese citizens after the country's unification (Marr 2000, 17) and to some extent the hardships and politics of the post-war years in general (Großheim 2010, 165). The civil war perspective is largely covered up by narratives of liberation of and unity with the South (Li-Lian 2001, 394). The same accounts for the neglected Cold War context (Schwenkel 2009, 6). Official historiography in Vietnam further largely ignores ethnic diversity, e.g. the history of the Khmer, Chinese, etc., and internal leadership tensions (Tai 1998, 197).

This review so far showed how memory politics in the DRV and later in the SRV created and sustained imbalances in narrating, commemorating and celebrating collective memories in public and everyday lives. I particularly focused on state policies regarding historiography and commemoration practices and how these provoked mechanisms of social in- and exclusion according to the interests of the dominating political regime. How these memory politics reflect on and play out in Vietnamese media is addressed in the next subchapter.

#### *4.2.1.3 Collective memories in Vietnamese media*

Besides historiography and the institutionalization of a heroic personality cult as subjects of memory politics in Vietnam, other public forms of collective memory strike the everyday lives of people, namely media. Only few scholarship addressed the intersections of collective memory and mass media in Vietnam. With regard to available research, we may discern between (1) educational, (2) news and (3) popular media as further means of mnemonic communication in contemporary Vietnam.

(1) Educational media in this context comprise teaching materials and colorful state agitation billboards that are particularly prominent in urban areas. These billboards and posters are used as public reminders of anniversaries of historical events (Sanko 2016) and thus underscore a politically motivated version of historiography as described above. They are, however, also means of educational campaigns about the legacies of war. Christina Schwenkel (2013, 138-139) e.g. discussed their role in the context of risk management with unexploded ordnances (UXO) in the heavily bombed and mined province of Quang Tri, Central Vietnam. The billboards were "meant to inform local communities about the dangers of encountering and handling war debris." (ibid., 139). Such educational media campaigns are widely applied in order to effectively inform the population of the prevailing present-day risks of former military struggles (Schwenkel 2013, 143-144).

History textbooks for highschoools and universities are still provided mainly by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and the editing and publishing processes controlled by the state. In a long-term review of teaching materials at secondary schools and universities, Großheim (2018, 171) concluded that the master narratives discussed previously have remained largely intact in recent history textbooks. In their "consistent teleology", the *Doi Moi* policy became the latest point of culmination in the success story of the CPV and socialism in Vietnam after unification (ibid., 154). One of the exceptions in the otherwise continuous and homogeneous narrative, however, concerns Sino-Vietnamese relations. While pre-reform teaching materials drew a negative image of China due to previous military clashes, this image was glossed over and after normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the early 1990s. (Großheim 2018, 161). Generally, history textbooks continue to be an important tool and most crucial educational media to legitimize the socialist party-state and one-party rule in present day (ibid., 171).

(2) News media have been attributed a paramount role in constructing collective memories in Western societies (Lang/Lang 1989; Edy 1999; Volkmer 2006a; Zelizer/Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014). In Vietnam's state-controlled media system, news are usually subject to directives by the Ministry of Communication and Information. Having discussed memory politics on historiography previously that provokes the question to what extent the party-political agenda affects journalism on past and present issues. For war coverage of DRV newspapers *Nhan Dan* and *Lao Dong* during the Second Indochina War, Schwenkel (2010, 91) observed "a sustained emphasis on narratives of victory and progress on the battlefield, as well as in the fields of technological, agricultural and scientific development." These findings partially present the same narratives of victory and heroism that were pushed and have dominated historiography. In contrast to international Western reporting, DRV war correspondents usually covered life, everyday routines and struggles of men and women during wartimes rather than death (ibid., 86-87). Particularly images of the socialist press captured war as a process instead of events and determined people for the revolutionary cause (ibid., 92). These selections, however, were not only politically driven and motivated by the declared goal of socialist journalism to educate and "to connect to the masses" but also culturally specific ethics of war coverage that found images of dead bodies disrespectful (ibid. 93).

Findings of another content analysis of contemporary coverage in two publications of the state-owned Vietnamese News Agency (VNA) in spring 2015 showed a strong presence of what Western media scholars termed commemorative and anniversary journalism (Sanko

2016b). Anniversary journalism can be understood as “[...] an important form of cultural memory” based on journalistic topicality that

[...] selects current commemorative events, mediates them to the public and thus enables the synchronization and self observation of society [...] (Amman 2010, 162-163).

The recurrent cyclic character of anniversaries and their journalistic coverage to commemorate certain historical events also has social implications: anniversaries as such prompt various social actors and institutions to create cultural meaning that can contribute to identity-generating processes, e.g. for a common national identity and political (de-) legitimization processes (Amman 2010, 162-163; Neverla/Lohner 2012, 285; Assmann/Assmann 1994, 124-126).

The study on VNA publications *Viet Nam News* and *Le Courrier du Vietnam* mirrored some of the politically encouraged historiographic patterns discussed previously. While these are also date-dependent, commemorative news stories in the study would usually refer to 20th century historical events and figures such as Ho Chi Minh's birthday or unification/liberation day (Sanko 2016b, 10-11). The coverage of these historic events usually go in line with the regular dominant narratives of liberation, unification and independence found in historiography (ibid., 13-14). Vietnamese journalists confirmed the thematic focus and repetitive nature of content in state-instructed commemorative journalism, but also indicated signs of changes in coverage. Such changes e.g. referred to an easing tone towards former collaborators of the RVN regimes and a stronger emphasis on the unity of all Vietnamese (ibid., 17). Great cash flows of remittances from members of the Vietnamese diaspora (*Viet Kieu*), among them Vietnamese refugees, reach the country every year (ibid.; Li-Lian 2001, 392). With the media sector becoming more commercialized and audience-oriented, these transnational ties shall not be threatened by falling back to a vocabulary of "traitors" (*mguoi phan boi*) and "puppets" (*nguy*) still present in Schwenkel's (2010) analysis of war reporting in the DRV. An ease of tone and waiver of this particular vocabulary has also been observed in more recent national press' coverage on war commemoration (Großheim 2016, 27). Journalism thus cannot only be understood along state ideological lines and largely depends on how strong state ties still are in the respective media outlet (McKinley 2011).

Journalism as a particular public sphere of constructing collective memories in Vietnam needs to be regarded in a web of tensions between state and economic interests as well as professional and cultural ethics in a vastly changing media environment. Such tensions can result in ambiguities, vagueness or even paradoxes in the reporting, but also leave space for

contestations or audiences' own interpretations; they lead to constraints, but also to opportunities for journalists in covering anniversaries (Sanko 2016b). For the daily coverage, Hammond (2014, 205-206) noted that the topic of Agent Orange (AO) as a war legacy reached further attention in the national and international press with lawsuits being filed against the producers of the dioxines in the US and the population pushing the topic on the public agenda. National media companies in Vietnam got involved and raised donations for AO victims (*ibid.*). The reporting in Vietnamese media usually referred to persons concerned not only as victims but as "survivors" (*ibid.*, 207). In another case, Großheim (2018, 168) also detected opportunities in negotiating the past in recent online news coverage of Sino-Vietnamese conflicts. With the recent conflicts in the South China Sea becoming a priority topic in national news, the popular news site *Vnexpress* e.g. marked the approaching anniversary of the Sino-Vietnamese War with an article and war photographs in unprecedented ways, provoking vast readers' responses (*ibid.*).

Western scholarship on anniversary journalism suggests that particular anniversaries constitute a social ritual serving to strengthen a community's identity and values through repeated commemoration (Kitch, 2002, 48). While these assumptions go in line with the Vietnamese government's aims to forge unity and trust in its leadership among its citizens, the relations and interests in the media sector have grown more complex as this brief review on the few studies on production and representation in journalism showed. Whether this institutionalized journalistic ritual is picked up in people's everyday mnemonic practices remains to be seen at this point.

(3) For popular media, it was mainly in novels and films of the 1980s that official historiography on war times and its legacies was viewed differently and more critically (Marr 2002). Revisionist films such as "Brothers and Relations" (1987) by Tran Vu and Nguyen Huu Luyen began to appear after Doi Moi and represent a form of "counter memory" in a Foucauldian sense, resisting official state historiography (Bradley 2001, 198). Revisionist filmmakers refused to follow the aesthetic standards of socialist realism and instead of representing state commemorative practices, they referred "back to ritual forms of family and village life long suppressed by the state, the metaphorical and subversive uses of gender in traditional literary idioms and the discursive strategies of anticolonial political discourse" (Bradley 2001, 198-199). The criticism of revisionist filmmaking in Vietnam addresses a sentiment of "postwar betrayal" that questioned the state's true acknowledgement and appreciation of war sacrifices by the people (*ibid.*, 208-211). Dang Nhat Minh's films such as "Woman on the Perfume River" (1987) belong to the national

film canon and have marked the post-reform film era in Vietnam (Duong 2012, 20). As the son of a former war hero and former National Assembly member, Dang Nhat Minh is Vietnam's most renowned director today and considered a "legitimate voice for the country" (ibid., 91). While rarely screened domestically, his work is also internationally known for emphasizing "heroic subjectivities of women, who represent the country as a place of honor and dignity in the postwar era." (ibid.) Despite his popularity his work did not remain uncontested due to its subversive criticism of state's communist regime, unfulfilled socialist ideals and commemoration in the postwar period (Bradley 2001, 215). While Dang was always allowed to produce his movies, other more open critics experienced harsh repressions. Female writer Duong Thu Huong deviated from official master narratives in her novel "Paradise of the Blind" (1988), criticizing the failures of the land reform in the 1950s and the export of workforce in the 1980s (Duong 2012, 96-97). In consequence, she was expelled from the CPV, detained for seven months for dissent and prohibited to publish (ibid., 91). These examples illustrate how negotiating the past in post-reform Vietnam remained a sensitive issue despite an ease of restrictions once it openly questions historical master narratives and CPV politics.

Similar to previous observations on Vietnamese news, changes in the wording of narratives towards more moderate tones have also been noted on Vietnamese TV. Instead of the long established "puppet government", the former political leadership of the RVN has now been simply referred to as "government" (Großheim 2008). Despite such political discourses, the contemporary and popular genre of Vietnamese TV dramas offers further ways of engaging with the past in present-day Vietnam. Nguyen-Thu (2019, 18) showed that Vietnamese TV dramas on family conflicts enable audiences to "connect personal memories with national histories". The "*Hanoian*" (1996) provokes nostalgic memories on socialist life during wartime and can be read as subversive criticism of corruption in Vietnam today (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 18). The TV drama "The City Stories" (2002) skips the socialist past and draws from national traditions of feudal and colonial times that allow for a stronger identification with values in present times of marketization and globalization. Instead of employing state-led macro and abstract narratives, these TV dramas cater to everyday life experiences in Vietnam's post-Reform society (ibid., 56). While this review outlined different representations of collective memory in Vietnam's media environment, the last subchapter of this literature review is devoted to people's everyday practices of remembering in Vietnam.

#### 4.2.2 Micro perspectives: Collective remembering in everyday Vietnam

Tai (1995, 274) reminds us that despite the public omnipresence and dominance of official master narratives and heroism, there exists a "multivocality" and a "range of possible meanings" of the symbolism surrounding them. The way people appropriate such dominating representations of collective memory and make meaning of them in the everyday might well diverge from the intended memory politics agenda as outlined in the previous subchapter.

The set up of the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum or Ho Chi Minh museum as commemorative sites, for example, was neither consensual within leadership circles nor among the population (Tai 1995, 275). Worshipping Ho Chi Minh at these sites seems a "widespread and genuine" characteristic of everyday life particularly in northern Vietnam (ibid., 278). Tai (1995, 280) counted school children and workers to be the main visitors. In a later ethnographic study Schwenkel (2011, 135) found that urban youths in North Vietnam were reluctant or indifferent towards state-initiated commemorative projects, which caused a "moral panic" and anxiety about collective forgetting among elder generations. Schwenkel (2011, 135) argues that urban youths still adhere to traditional and "revolutionary" values (family support; development/progress of the country) in different ways, while embracing the opportunities provided by economic reforms and consumerism.

At local level, Kwon (2006, 117) argues that historical national heroism as symbolized i.e. in Ho Chi Minh's personality cult will only be adopted if it serves the "community's genealogical heritage". The same seems to hold true for the engagement with memorials. In Kwon's (2006, 147) fieldwork in rural areas, for example, villagers did not connect intimately with public war memorials in daily life. In other cases the adoption of certain state commemorative practices or objects at local level was a strategy to reclaim spiritual space and avoid controls on other ancestral practices (ibid., 117-118). While people were discouraged from carrying out spiritual practices in the DRV and pushed into the domestic sphere, they regained popularity after economic reforms, particularly *việc họ*, the work of family ancestral worship (Kwon 2006, 3; DiGregorio/Salemink 2007).

According to Vietnamese cultural conception, ritual practices of ancestor worship such as funeral rites and offerings at the ancestral altar create a connection and enable communication between the living and the dead to create harmony between their interdependent worlds (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433). Ancestor worship can therefore be understood as commemoration and communication practice at the same time. The thereby created "social intimacy" between the living and the dead acknowledges the

importance of the memory of the deceased. (Kwon 2006, 62-63). Usually, the commemoration traces back for three generations, bolstering familial morality and the "continuity of generations" (ibid., 4). Commemoration of ancestors in the everyday is particularly common on their death anniversaries (*ngày giỗ*) and on the most important holiday of the year—Lunar New Year (*Tet*) (Marr 2002, 15). Vietnamese regard *Tet* primarily as "family time; many of the activities associated with it take place in the family home and involve kin relations." (McAllister 2012, 116) Thus, besides spiritual place, e.g. pagodas and public sites, the home is the most relevant place for memory practices on *Tet*. *Tet* celebrations at home involve the renewal of the home by e.g. cleaning, refurbishing or reinstalling the ancestral altar including the framed photographs of the deceased relatives in order to renew social relationships with the living and the dead and make sure to end the old and start the new year in a good way. With digitization these photographs have also become objects of digital re-editing, e.g. by changing outfits of the portrayed deceased to show higher economic status (Jellema 2007, 478). *Tet* celebrations also include the preparation, offering and sharing of special food that often times are connected with the origin of ancestors or those celebrating (ibid., 117-118), thus serving as an identity marker. McAllister (2012, 120-121) also pointed out the significance of further communicative practices: interpersonal communication between family members and friends to share news or the taking of photographs at different (visited) places are typical engagements during the holidays. In addition, the tradition of reconstructing and keeping records of family genealogies has seen a revival (Marr 2002, 15). The storage and distribution of these family records (*gia phả*) is nowadays eased by means of digital reproduction (Jellema 2007, 479; Schlecker 2013, 82).

In the cases of war dead, ancestral and commemorative rites in the everyday largely depend on the community and the circumstances of death. Some local communities created their own commemorative stelae independent from state allowances (Schlecker 2013, 86-90). In the cases where publicly acknowledged commemoration was refrained or "bad deaths" such as civilian mass killings complicated public remembering, domestic ritual spaces became more important (Kwon 2006, 6-7). Locals in Ha My and My Lai for example started to renovate places of the civilian war death and invested their private money in appropriate ceremonies and shrines since the 1990s (ibid., 3). More recently, private commemoration of the state's unacknowledged war dead has been more broadly accepted. The former war cemetery (Binh Hoa) of the RVN was reopened for civil use, restoration and private commemoration in 2006 and war casualties of the Sino-Vietnamese border war

are commemorated at the war cemetery Vi Xuyen in Ha Giang, the northern province bordering China (Großheim 2016, 31). Among the survivors of war, there have also been grass-root level initiatives to bring topics neglected in public memory to the fore. Hammond (2013, 189) noted for example that former soldiers of the DRV's People's Army and thus with "revolutionary backgrounds" were the first activists to address the issue of Agent Orange, its longterm effects and claim state assistance in Vietnam.

Other research also revealed that despite the prominent master narratives about the war in public memory, altering narratives do exist in other public sectors such as tourism (Kennedy/Williams 2001; Schwenkel 2013), the arts (Taylor 2001) or in the domestic sphere of people's homes. For the latter, narratives of home-coming, the waiting wife, stories on war trauma and death, restless souls and ghosts that did not make it to the "otherworld" prevail in private spheres (Margara 2012, 79-93). In her ethnography on urban female market traders in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Leshkovich (2008) showed also how vendors used the ghost narrative metaphorically in the everyday to deal with socio-economic struggles and inequalities after unification given their sympathies for the old RVN regime. The case study demonstrates how an open dialogue about the past is prevented due to hierarchical power structures established as a legacy of the past. The resulting inability of publicly voicing one's own account of the past illustrates mechanisms of collective forgetting in the unified Vietnamese society. Großheim (2010, 165) further noted that people in South Vietnam with a non-revolutionary background rather speak of the Second Indochina War as "the war", "civil war" or the time "before 1975" (Leshkovich 2008). Moreover, the mnemonic meanings of the vendors' communicative practice in Leshkovich's (2008) case study is very subtle and disguised in everyday conversations on the market. Kwon's (2006, 8) work further illustrated how personal accounts of present everyday life conflate with narrations of everyday life during wartimes. The studies indicate that there are different forms and strategies of talking about war times in different social groups. These differences can be quite subtle in everyday conversations depending on the social acceptance and public dominance of particular narratives.

It needs to be noted that until the 1970s, word-of-mouth and interpersonal communication within families and close friends were the only alternative sources to information on the war in the DRV (Marr 2002, 16). Yet, Tai (2001b, 5) reminds us that plurality and multiple meanings of collective pasts remain to exist even within single families. When restrictions on the media and cultural sector eased for some time after economic reforms, scholars diagnosed liberating tendencies in collective remembering in Vietnam. Taylor (2001, 23-24)

for example observed that in the 1990s, residents of southern Vietnamese cities played formerly banned music sounds of RVN times (*nhạc vàng*) in public spaces. This genre themes emotions of longing and the experience of separation. Some of the songs were re-produced by Vietnamese refugees in Orange County, California (Valverde 2003). Although never completely banned *cai luong*, traditional singing, was again very popular in the countryside at the time (Taylor 2001, 23). Taylor (2001) saw in this ubiquity and preoccupation with 1950s/60s music a "distinct historical experience" (ibid., 23) of southern Vietnam, but also a "social response" to recent events (ibid., 27). The study thus hints one, at the importance of music but also the exchange with the Vietnamese diaspora for engaging with the past in the everyday.

Doi Moi naturally did not only affect the economy, media and cultural industries as separate sectors, but also the everyday lives of people as such. The economic reforms paved the way for international collaborations, trade and the growth of an urban Vietnamese middle class that could increasingly afford information and communication technologies to connect domestically, transnationally and globally. Schwenkel (2006, 2009) for example showed how transnationalization and marketization allowed for creating new spaces of tension and negotiation for collective memory i.e. in museum exhibitions. Besides these institutionalized spaces, however, the increasing entry of media technologies into, particularly middle class households, in Vietnam potentially afforded people with more self-determined, faster and cheaper opportunities to engage with the past. Given the reluctance and limits of many historians to cover certain historical topics for example, people increasingly turned to other media resources (Marr 2002, 16). Particularly with the advent of the Internet, prior research suggests that altering, liberalizing and contesting narratives became more visible online (Großheim 2008, 2010). Online memory debates in the web forum *Talawas* e.g. included individual posts that contested dominant views on the post-war years and the period of the state subsidized economy (*bao cap*) and sparked a (trans-)national re-negotiation of that time (Großheim 2010, 165).

Online communication tremendously eased to get and stay in touch with emigrated Vietnamese and exchange views on the past transnationally. Vietnamese diasporans in the US or Australia often hold up a positive, sometimes nostalgic, memory of the RVN (Taylor 2001, 5; Großheim 2010, 152; Nguyen 2013). Such views, including the demise of the RVN in 1975 as an end to political pluralism and freedom, spread more widely through diasporic websites during the 1990s and were passed on to following generations in the Vietnamese diaspora (Taylor 2001, 5). With oral histories of ARVN veterans Nguyen (2013, 711)

illustrated how their diasporic narratives "counter dominant state interpretations of the war" in Vietnam. They counter dominant narratives by criticizing communist paramilitary interventions in the RVN, pointing out positive aspects of daily life in the RVN (ibid., 701) and pride in their own military service, providing witness accounts on re-education, internment, social discrimination, as well as poverty, suffering and hunger during the post-war years (ibid., 707-709). The traumatic experiences of mental and physical violence caused so much harm and fears for veterans that some of them are not able or unwilling to talk about them (Nguyen 2013, 709). Social discrimination in their memories was also strongly related to interpersonal encounters and communication with fellow citizens, who would often label them as "'nguy' (renegade)" after unification (ibid. 707). Some of these veterans also engaged in transnational memory work by keeping in touch with and supporting ARVN veterans who stayed in Vietnam or participating in commemorative marches of the Vietnam veteran community in Australia (Nguyen 2013, 709). Transnational communication between Vietnamese citizens in Vietnam and those abroad can therefore be regarded as a resource for encountering contesting views and negotiating official memory in Vietnam. The diversification of the media environment in the course of mediatization (Krotz 2001, 19; Hepp 2020, 5) therefore seems to provide and ease the potential for communicating multiple versions of collective memories in Vietnam.

The literature review on constructing collective memories in Vietnam outlined memory politics in the country historically and strategically by the communist leadership. It showed how certain memory policies and rewards were intended to teach socialist values, forge nation-building and ultimately built a new socialist society. Therefore political measures were supposed to translate into practices of everyday life. The reviewed studies suggested that despite their wide public distribution people respond differently on state-initiated commemorative events, narratives and encouraged practices depending on age, class, historical and regional contexts. We also know that the CPV is not a homogeneous body and policies are subject to change (Giebel 2001, 79). Yet, these politics forged mechanisms of social stratification, inclusion, exclusion and "moral discrimination" over decades (Malarney 2007, 517). The preoccupation with the state's political agency in communicating memories in Vietnam has been criticized given the neglect of studies on the cultural and social spheres of the everyday (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 4). Moreover, scholarship on collective memories in Vietnam has largely concentrated on media representations and content instead of their appropriation, reception and use. The need for studies on communicating memories in the everyday becomes ever more pressing in a changing and pluralizing media

environment that potentially leaves greater choices to individuals. The phenomenon of communicating memories in the everyday in Vietnam is clearly underresearched in this regard. In this dissertation I therefore develop a methodological design based on the previous theoretical premises and prior scholarship to empirically examine Vietnamese urbanites' ways of engaging with collective pasts.

### 4.3 Interim summary I: Communicating memories in Vietnam – Points of departure

What do we know so far and in what ways does prior research motivate the study on Vietnam? The dissertation draws from the contributions of three major disciplines: memory studies, communication and media studies as well as Vietnamese studies (Fig. 3).

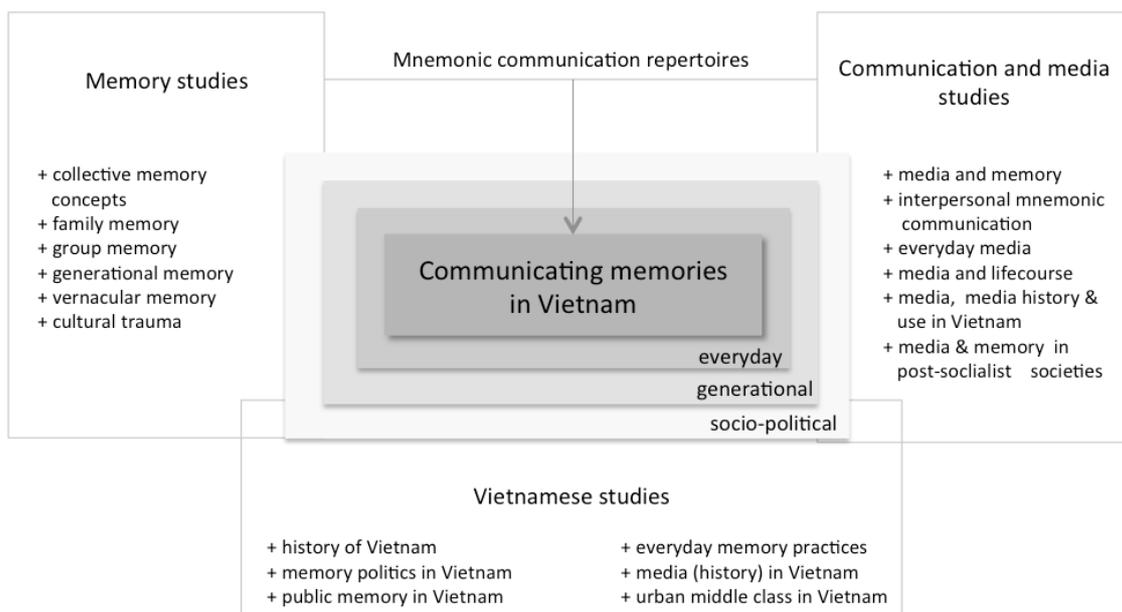


Fig. 3: Overview on prior research and points of departure of the study

Theoretically, there exists a plethora of concepts related to social forms of memory including "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1992), "cultural memory" (Assmann/ Assmann 1994; J. Assmann 2008), "communicative memory" (Knoblauch 1999). At the same time, the terms "collective" and "cultural memory" have publicly and academically been so widely used that ultimately they would address varying social phenomena at various analytical levels, including the formation of social relations, national identities or processes of public knowledge construction and dispersion. Astrid Erll (2011, 6) early noted that "collective memory" had become a "generic term". While this certainly serves

interdisciplinary research endeavors and comparisons, it also requires an even stronger delineation and theoretical specification of the social phenomenon at hand.

Given this need, the theoretical chapter of this dissertation first narrowed down the social phenomenon of "communicating memories" as communicative ways of engaging with collective pasts in the everyday. These ways are conceptually understood as particular forms and practices of mnemonic communication. By determining nine theoretical premises, I situated the phenomenon of "communicating memories" within the interdisciplinary field of social memory research and media appropriation research in the everyday.

The reviewed main works that have contributed to theorizations of collective memory often remained at a conceptual level and were not founded on empirical data in contemporary societies. It therefore hardly included any heuristics on how "communicating memories" as one phenomenon under the umbrella of "collective memory" could be grasped empirically. As conceptually communicating memories was limited to everyday engagements, I drew from the repertoire-approach in media use and appropriation research in order to develop an own heuristic (mnemonic communication repertoires) for assessing forms, practices and social contexts of mnemonic communication (see also Sanko 2016a).

The literature review showed that prior empirical research on communicating memories usually focused on one particular form of mnemonic communication. While many studied signified the importance of face-to-face communication, notably within families (Keppler 1994; Welzer et al. 2002; Leonhard 2002), media studies often neglected it. Instead studies on news or specific media formats are more common. The conceptually developed repertoire approach to communicating memories allows for an explorative and unbiased access to whatever communicative ways people would find relevant in their own lifeworld to engage with collective pasts. Previous research that takes a cross-media or transcommunicative perspective is usually still scarce, particularly beyond National Socialism and Holocaust research, but it does suggest an interdependence of various forms of mnemonic communication (e.g. Finger 2017; Krogsgaard 2017).

Memory and media studies with a focus on generational aspects further argued that people's socialization within particular time periods and with certain media technologies are crucial for their engagements with collective pasts (Volkmer 2006a; Bolin 2017). Further research on collective memory in post-socialist societies tends to share some of these observations, noting intergenerational gaps or differences in communicating memories (Reifova et al. 2013, 212). While this still young strand of media and memory research on Cold War pasts has contributed to comprehend nostalgias, coping and collective identities

in post-socialist and transitional societies, it has not yet embraced those societies that experienced the Cold War as a hot war and whose regimes stayed intact.

This is where the case study on Vietnam comes in. Once the hot spot of Cold War aggressions and known to many Western television audiences as "a war", Vietnam today represents one of the few societies still governed under communist, one-party rule. Little media research has been conducted on Vietnam. That does not only signal Euro- and Western centrism in communication and media studies, but also hint at the challenges of state surveillance, bureaucracy and cultural protocol while conducting research in Vietnam as a foreign scholar. While the history of Vietnamese media development is academically traced, particularly qualitative studies on media appropriation are extremely scarce. Apart from rough figures from market research and NGO statistics, details from anthropological accounts and a few single media studies, we actually do know only very little about how Vietnamese embraced and appropriated media technologies in their everyday lives. The case study seeks to address this research gap.

Questions of collective memory within Vietnamese society have usually been discussed by historians and cultural anthropologists who have nurtured longterm relations to the country and its people. Their research reveals in great detail the agenda of memory politics of past and present political regimes in Vietnam, particularly that of the CPV and its predecessors. This strand of scholarship demonstrates how there is a pattern of CPV memory politics introducing policies and utilizing communicative means that specifically target people's cultural beliefs and everyday lives in order to built a socialist society. Further anthropological research also revealed that people in Vietnam acted differently as intended upon those policies if they did not seem suitable for everyday and cultural routines (Kwon 2008). It still remains to be seen, however, how people in Vietnam today deal with contemporary public memory as propagated by the state and its institutions – another major task of this dissertation.

## 5 Research design and methods

In determining nine premises (PRE1-9, Fig. 1), the theory chapter narrowed down the phenomenon of communicating memories conceptually and outlined a research subject that is empirically traceable at the practice-level of analysis (see 2.1-2.2). Yet, the basic research questions of "how people engage communicatively with collective pasts in urban Vietnam and how do they make sense of it?" (RQ1-2) require an open, cross-media and transcommunicative approach that is culturally sensitive.

The explorative and open nature of repertoire research (Hasebrink/Popp 2006; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012; Hasebrink 2015) as well as its integration of everyday and appropriation paradigms provided the basis for developing a heuristic of "mnemonic communication repertoires" (MCRs) in order to empirically assess the phenomenon of communicating memories. Empirically investigating "communicating memories" as MCRs allows for tracing mnemonic communication practices (MCPs) in greater entirety, their embeddedness in the everyday and relevance for individuals in relation to other social groups (see 2.3).

Based on the heuristic of MCRs, I have conceptualized a research design that enables an explorative, culturally sensitive approach to communicating memories and includes predominantly qualitative methods. I have chosen semi-structured interviews in combination with visual elicitation and brief questionnaires for generating empiric data about how people in urban Vietnam communicate about collective memories. Qualitative content analysis then serves to systematically analyze the interview data. These methods enable me to reconstruct individual's MCRs and analyze how people make sense of them in the everyday. In order to meet and guarantee the standards of qualitative research, including reliability and validity of data, methodological procedures need to be comprehensible, rule-governed and well-documented (Steinke 2004; Mayring 2015, 125).

This following chapter serves these purposes. After presenting the procedure, complexities and structure of sampling and recruiting participants for the study in Vietnam, the chapter discusses each method, the required methodological tools and the protocol followed in generating and analyzing the collected data. The chapter closes with a critical reflection on my research that includes methodological limitations, postcolonial criticism and implications for ethics in a foreign, post-colonial, late socialist and authoritarian research setting.

## 5.1 Sampling and recruitment

Prior research on media and collective memory suggests that varying media socializations and media generations bring forth not only varying patterns of media use (Bolin 2017), but also different historical consciousnesses and ways people become to know and make sense of collective pasts (Volkmer 2006). Studies further indicate that present social roles and life stages determine mnemonic communication practices (Bolin 2017; Hartung 2010; Leonhard 2002; Keppler 2001). In the specific case of Vietnam, we have learned that media socialization diverged significantly between the urban and rural populations, gender and ideologically between the DRV and RVN (1955-1975) (see 4.1). Since urban centres have usually been the initial spaces of media development and have been subject to greater social changes, the sampling and recruitment targeted primarily urbanites.

In order to take into account potential regional and ideological differences due to the socialization in different states, recruiting took place in the present capital Hanoi (also former capital of the DRV) and Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC, formerly Saigon and capital of the RVN). Thus the first sampling criterion was current residency in one of the two largest cities in Vietnam, Hanoi or HCMC. In order to rule out gender bias in the sample, even gender distribution between the two heteronormative conceptions of gender was pursued. Gender was therefore a second sampling criterion.

A third important sampling criterion was age. Age plays into several relevant aspects that have been identified in prior research as determiners of different patterns of mnemonic communication and identity (see 3.2.2). According to Mannheim's (1959, 291) sociology of generations, age is one factor, determining an individual's location within the historical process. Taking age, residency, gender and thus varying socialization factors into account shall provide insights on how social difference is reflected or not reflected in "communicating memories" in unified Vietnam due to these factors. Moreover, findings can provide reasons for why collective memory is perpetuated or not.

The study partially worked with pre-defined age groups that represent people who — due to their birthdate — potentially experienced certain historical stages in Vietnam's national and media history and might therefore share a common generational location. The pre-defined classification of generational groups covers birth cohorts either born in the 1950s (GEN I), 1970s (GEN II) or 1990s (GEN III). The selected decades for birth cohorts are based on major ruptures or changes in Vietnam's history. People of these selected age groups usually experienced these ruptures or their long-term consequences during their formative years (11-16) (Volkmer 2006b, 6):

1) Generation I - 1950s (GEN I): This age group was born and grew up in an age of political and social turmoil. The First Indochina War and French colonial rule ended with the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Geneva accords arranged for the separation of Vietnam that led to the formation of two ideologically differently ruled states, the DRV and the RVN. Two different media systems with different infrastructures and products evolved as well. A first big migration wave from North to South followed while the border was still open. The 1950s are also the time period of the until today historically sensitively treated and contested land reforms in the DRV. This age group had their formative years during the Second Indochina War and potentially witnessed the civil war on one or the other side. Educated, elitist households in both states mainly had access to mass media technologies with the RVN's media infrastructure and resources being broader and more developed. Due to growing up in two different states, this age group is likely to be more heterogeneous, showing greater variations on account of their socialization and generational location in a Mannheimian sense (Mannheim 1959).

2) Generation II - 1970s (GEN II): The age group of persons born in the 1970s grew up primarily in the unified state of the SRV under communist rule. During their formative years, they witnessed the time of Vietnam's economic and diplomatic isolation and state subsidies (*bao cap*, 1975-1986). Media technologies were still scarce in the average urban household and were often shared across households. South Vietnam's society and economy was supposed to adapt to socialism and follow the model of the DRV after unification. Resettlement into so-called New Economic Zones, re-education and expropriation enforced the aspired socio-economic transformation. The SRV continued to be involved in violent conflicts in the region, most prominently with the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (Cambodian-Vietnamese War, 1978-1979) and Chinese military in the North (Sino-Vietnamese War, 1979). By that time the SRV, experienced a mass exodus due to war, political repressions, poverty and lack of future perspectives (Su/Sanko 2017).

3) Generation III - 1990s (GEN III): The youngest age group within the study can be regarded as the post-*Doi Moi* generation that has benefited from Vietnam's economic reforms and open door policies since the mid-1980s. These reforms created spaces for economic growth, looser state control over cultural and social practices and wider networks of international relations. As a result, the Vietnamese urban middle class has been growing and media technologies became a self-evident part in everyday life.

People from these age groups were selected in order to compare and examine whether and how they forge stable generational locations that differ from another on the basis of

communicative and memory practices (see also Meyen 2016, 386). Using this sample, the study also investigates cross-generational aspects that might persist in communicative constructions of collective memory in Vietnam today.

Access to the field and the recruitment process largely relied on cooperation with other institutions, particularly the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Vietnam National University – University of Social Sciences and Humanities Vietnam (VNU USSH). While access to these institutions and thus recruitment was eased through previous personal contacts established during my time as a volunteer in Vietnam (2011-2012), they also conditioned the socio-demographics of people in the sample: almost all of them share a high educational level (at least university level) and some form of international experience or interest.

Notably for people recruited from the DAAD alumni network major language barriers could be ruled out since they gained a university degree in Germany. They were also more open and willing to assist in a German research project than those who had no particular interest in or experience with Germany or foreign affairs. Recruiting among DAAD alumni resulted in a sample that mostly comprised scientists and researchers occupying higher job positions, particularly in the two elder age groups (GEN I-II). A high social status in Vietnam often comes with important personal relations. The status therefore can alleviate not only language barriers due to professionalism and international experience, but also carries potential to speak more openly about sensitive issues thanks to a position of power and a protective professional network.

It needs to be noted that the DAAD's alumni network showed a bias of people from North Vietnam, including those alumni residing in HCMC. The DAAD generally receives more applications from students based at universities in the North of Vietnam. Further, the majority of DAAD grantees is supported by government scholarships which creates dependencies on the state. This might not be as relevant for current students or fairly recent alumni, but for previous generations. In the DRV and after unification, family biographies and revolutionary efforts played a crucial role for educational or career opportunities provided by the state (three-generation concept) (Su/Sanko 2017, 15; Leshkovich 2014, 143). That means that among elder DAAD grantees family histories might rather tend to have a revolutionary background that came with educational and career privileges. This assumption is substantiated by the tradition of Vietnamese-German educational exchange that has evolved in some families over generations, with a lot of

members of the older generation having initially established ties in the former German Democratic Republic, back then a socialist fraternity state (DAAD 2015).

Using the DAAD alumni network to recruit interview respondents in HCMC, also often resulted in meeting informants that in fact were born and raised in the North of the country. In order to balance out some of the bias in regard to profession and origin in the sample, I supplemented the recruiting with the snow-ball-technique. The technique implied to ask interviewees themselves for further volunteers in their social circuits, to involve my previous network of personal contacts in Vietnam and my local interpreters for example. The resulting recommendations, however, also led to the recruitment of a few informants that did not match the pre-defined age groups. The VNU USSH as a second institutional collaborator further facilitated contacts to journalists and students enrolled in programs and clubs concerned with foreign affairs in Hanoi. Generally, students were the most flexible and easiest group to recruit.

If a person of the facilitated contacts met the selection criteria discussed above, they were contacted most commonly via e-mail usually followed by phone calls, via multipliers and personal contacts or via previous informants (snow-ball technique). E-mails stated very generally and vaguely the research interest: Vietnamese culture, history and media. Some potential informants asked for a list with the set of questions. In order to avoid losing their trust or risking a cancellation, three to four exemplary, but very general questions were revealed to a few of the respondents. It cannot be ruled out that this prior information caused possible biases in the answers of respondents. The estimated and announced interview time of approximately two hours provoked cancellations as it was considered too long to integrate into everyday businesses and responsibilities. Although people were usually informed about the average length of an interview, some rather expected a shorter journalistic interview instead of an extended interview for academic purposes. Further limitations that complicated the recruitment process included: the long period of national holidays during the *Tet* season (Lunar New Year) (February 15-22nd, 2015), which is a time devoted to family, relatives and friends, for some to spiritual rituals or simply vacation time (see 4.2.2). Ahead of the holiday season, most people were not willing to participate in an interview, because they were too busy with the preparations related to this festive season. Therefore, many of the requests pended until after this holiday period.

The recruiting and interviewing of informants took place in Hanoi and HCMC between January and April 2015. The total sample encompassed 59 interviews: 31 in Hanoi and 28 in HCMC. Regarding age, 16 informants covered GEN I, 19 GEN II, 16 GEN III; 4

respondents were born before 1950 and 4 were positioned in between the age groups (see Tab. 2). During the fieldwork, I also interviewed 12 media professionals<sup>6</sup> for contextual knowledge about the media environment in Vietnam (for details see Sanko 2016b).

Subjects	Attribute	Number
<b>IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS</b>		<b>total: 59</b>
<b>urban middle class in Vietnam</b>	• Generation 0 (<1950) Hanoi	2
	• Generation 0 (<1950) HCMC	2
	• Generation I (>1950) Hanoi	7
	• Generation I (>1950) HCMC	9
	• Generation II (>1970) Hanoi	8
	• Generation II (>1970) HCMC	11
	• Generation III (>1990) Hanoi	10
	• Generation III (>1990) HCMC	6
	• other	4
<b>EXPERT INTERVIEWS</b>		<b>total: 9</b>
<b>media professionals</b>	• subeditors news agency	(3) 1
	• head of media corporation	1
	• state journalists	5
	• freelancer	1
	• blogger	1

Table 2: Number and distribution of qualitative interviews in Vietnam

## 5.2 Qualitative research interview

Qualitative interviews as a research method seek to generate empirical (verbal) data that describe and aim to "understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives." (Kvale 1996, 27). "Communicating memories" in the context of this research has been described as an everyday life phenomenon. For the case study of urban Vietnam, however, we have little prior knowledge about how urbanites actually engage with collective pasts and what such central themes of the past might be in everyday contexts. By applying qualitative research interviews, the aim "[...] is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewees [...]" (Kvale 1996, 5-6) in order to explore the phenomenon of communicating memories in the everyday. Qualitative interviews usually take place verbally and face-to-face, utilizing everyday language that characterizes their conversational nature (Loosen 2016, 141-142). It is this similarity to mundane conversations that allows the researcher to dive deeper into the intimate spheres of everyday life. This access is facilitated by qualitative interviewing's openness, interviewee-centricity and ability to grasp respondents' meaning-making, evaluations and emotions (Nawratil 2009a, 319-320). At the same time, the interview guidelines or protocol at the same time structure the interview, determine main themes of interest and guarantee a governed and transparent procedure.

<sup>6</sup> One interview took place with three reporters at the same time. That is why the table (Tab. 2) lists nine expert interviews in total.

The guidelines make sure that reliable, valid and comparable interview data are generated in the process of qualitative research (Loosen 2016, 142; Nawratil 2009a, 325).

For the purpose of this study, I designed an interview protocol that comprised all interview questions and instructions for two further integrated methodological tools (card sorting, visual elicitation). The qualitative research interview in the context of this study further borrows elements from various forms of qualitative interviewing, including biographic interviews (Bohnsack/Marotzki 1998; Nawratil 2009b) and guided semi-structured interviews (Nawratil 2009a; Loosen 2016, 143).

### *Interview guidelines*

The basic outline of the interview protocol comprises five main thematic sets of questions: (1) media biographic knowledge (media memories), (2) general media use (3) mnemonic media use, (4) intergenerational and family communication and (5) various aspects of national and cultural history. The guidelines exist in German and English language (see appendix 9.1.1).

In a first step, the interview guidelines include the brief introduction of the interviewer and an explanation of the purpose of the PhD project. In the following, the guidelines instruct to explicate the use of the interview data and to ensure anonymity of the informant. On that basis, the interviewee was to be informed about the start of the recording and give his or her consent on the use of the interview and the data on record.

While the sequence of questions remained open in the actual course of the interview, the initial question on the interview guide stayed a fixed opener for the conversation. This initial question was an open narrative question informed by biographical research (Bohnsack/Marotzki 1998; Nawratil 2009a, 2009b), a strand of empirical research considered fruitful to gain insight on informants' (media) socialization and significant events and memories of their life course and to contextualize the generated data. The narrative question does not only serve to break the ice, but it allows the interviewee to set his or her own thematic frame of relevance (Klein et al. 2016, 5). People who tell and evaluate their own lifeworld usually choose a perspective that serves their present needs (Meyen 2016, 386).

Applying a rather open approach in the beginning of the interview mainly based on autobiographical information also stands for a non-media centric perspective and allows respondents to define the role of media technologies in their life course and in relation to other everyday practices. Critics of media centrism argue that a research focus on media as

technologies, texts or institutions alone cannot explain individuals' ascribed meaning of media in their everyday lives (Klein et al. 2016, 5; Couldry 2010, 119).

Beyond the initial opener, one main concern was to address people's communication and media practices in the embeddedness of their life courses, social contexts and everyday lives. Earlier research acknowledges that communicative practices are often inherent to everyday routines and thus represent habitualized or taken-for-granted knowledge (Schütz/Luckmann 2003, 98). The resulting challenge for interviewing and conceptualizing interview guidelines is then to trigger the interviewee's consciousness and knowledge about these self-evident routines. The lack of awareness about one's own daily, habitualized communication practices therefore requires particular stimuli. One interviewing strategy, usually at the beginning of the interview, are so-called "experience questions" (Patton 2015, 445), asking respondents about a typical working day.

Another strategy of conceptualizing the interview guideline in an explorative and broader way, capturing descriptions about everyday attitudes, was a card-sorting exercise integrated as a "creative element" of the interview (Meyen et al. 2011, 96-97). Drawing from Meyen et al.'s (2011, 105) suggested model, nine cards were labeled with different areas of life: family/partner, friends/neighbours, work/career, leisure/hobbies, politics/society, arts/culture origin/traditions, media, "other". In this exercise, respondents were asked to sort and rank the cards according to their importance to them. The exercise aimed at gaining a first impression on what are the most valued reference points for informants in their everyday lives. In other words, the cards potentially reveal first insights on respondents' value orientations. The card-exercise appeared even more adequate in a cultural setting that was not the researcher's own. The card-sorting exercise was therefore not only a refreshing stimulant in contrast to the usual sets of questions, but also a methodological tool that sensitizes the researcher for possibly varying value orientations in a foreign cultural setting. The integration of a "media"-card was to stimulate responses on informant's own understanding of the term and on how they situate "media" in their daily lives. These sets of cards were prepared in English, German and Vietnamese.

Beside these more general, non-media centric elements of the interview guideline, other sets of questions centre on topics that address the main research questions (RQ1-2) more directly. Questions on media memories and media biographies intend to generate personal accounts of media development in Vietnam and elicit respondent's own media socialization. This past perspective may also reveal how informants did not only encounter

specific media technologies during their life course but also certain content such as war propaganda for example.

Prior research on memory and media shows how previous media experience can shape present MCRs (Finger 2017; Krogsgaard 2017). The set of questions on general media use was supposed to assess in how far historical or mnemonic content plays a role in people's overall media repertoire. Questions on family and intergenerational questions particularly targeted forms of interpersonal communication that have been rendered important in people's everyday engagement with collective pasts beyond media (Keppler 1994; Welzer et al. 2002). The integration of this set of question was considered particularly important in socio-cultural settings where family memories and national history overlap because of time witnesses. It also aimed at revealing mnemonic practices in family life. The set of historical questions then particularly targeted the evaluation and meaning-making of particular time periods and events of Vietnam's history (French colonial times, First and/or Second Indochina Wars, separation and/or unification of the country, subsidized times (*bao cap*), time economic reforms (*Doi Moi*) as well as their representation and commemoration. The interview guidelines mostly included open questions due to the explorative nature of the study.

Another major methodological tool integrated into the interview protocol is the visual elicitation technique (Collier 1957; Harper 2002) borrowed from anthropological and visual communication research. Visual elicitation is a method that is based on the idea that visual probes are included in the interview process. These can serve different purposes in the course of the interview such as stimulating the memory of certain events and experiences, easing the discussion between interviewer and informant and gaining insights to more subtle and subconscious areas of the human being. Elicitation as a methodological technique first found mention in the form of "photo elicitation" in a journal article on an interdisciplinary study on migration and mental health by John Collier in 1957. This higher degree of participation led to an easier access to the field of discussion and informants felt more relaxed because they felt less observed and intrigued directly. Collier (1957, 849) thus called the photographs "a second subject" in the interview that eases the hierarchies between interviewer and respondent, can serve as a "language bridge" (*ibid.*, 858) and narrows the gap between them (Harper 2002, 20). The use of photographs allowed a deeper access to more subtle and emotional spheres of the human beings interviewed (Collier 1957, 854). The discussions of images led to concrete, in-depth and unforeseen data (*ibid.*, 849; Collier/Collier 1986, 99).

Visual elicitation in this regard also assists to cross-cultural boundaries in an interview setting, because pictures can be read across cultures (Collier/Collier 1986, 99) and thus can make the researcher become more aware of his or her own cultural views. This creation of perspective and distance is particularly helpful in studies of everyday life, when informants are often not aware of their routines and habitual practices. Photo elicitation not only "sharpen[s] the memory" (ibid., 106; Collier 1957, 849) and stimulates discussions on depicted objects or situations, but it also provides a different angle and awareness towards the taken-for-granted (ibid., 850). Similarly in memory and media research, Reifova and colleagues (2013, 205) used audiovisual elicitation in focus groups as a "tool to generate feelings associated with certain contexts and provide data enriched with the abstract layer of emotions." By showing scenes of a commemorative Czech TV series (*Vypravej*), they found that particularly "retro-signifiers" such as clothes and socialist symbols triggered personal memories and served as points of comparing media representations with own knowledge about the past (ibid., 207).

The review on historiography and historical or commemorative public media in Vietnam showed a strong influence of state memory politics on mediated representations of collective memory that eased to some extent after *Doi Moi* (see 4.2.1). In order to see how informants respond directly to current depictions of collective memory in state media, the interview guidelines included visual elicitation by the use of Vietnamese press photographs. Schudson (1992, 4) described news media "as indices of publicly available knowledge". In this sense, they can also be considered as indices of public knowledge about the past and "primary repository of collective memory in every society" (Zelizer/Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2014, 2). I therefore decided for images released in the press as the most recent and thematically broad indices.

The press photographs were black-and-white printouts from digital versions of the national news agency's (VNA) newspapers *Viet Nam News* and *Le Courier du Vietnam* (LCV). Besides the assumption that as VNA publications they would be relatively close to the governmental line of memory politics, availability and access to those papers played a great role in their selection. The papers were collected for a year from 2013 to 2014 before the fieldtrip to Vietnam and were accessible through the digital press archive at the public library in Bremen, Germany. The fact that both publications are published in English and French was first considered unproblematic for the use of images only and had the advantage that I could contextualize images better. Later on during my fieldtrip and when

meeting VNA reporters in Hanoi, I learned that these selected publications often consisted of translations from the original Vietnamese content (Sanko 2016b, 8).

During the selection process of the photographs used in the interviews, I aimed to cover a range of topics that are also addressed by the main sets of questions. The eight selected news photographs represent several topics related to collective memory in Vietnam: historical figures, historical places/monuments, historical movies, cultural heritage (architecture/folk music), commemorative days (for an overview and description see appendix 9.1.2). They stand not only for different aspects, but also various historical time periods. Some of these figures and events feature prominently in public representations of national and cultural history in Vietnam (see 4.2.1).

I decided for black-and-white printouts mainly for pragmatic reasons. Except for cover photos and the photographs from LCV, the photographs were also originally published in black and white. From visual research we also know that black-and-white pictures stimulate memory stronger than colored ones (Berger 1992, 192 cited in Harper 2002, 13). The press photographs were not isolated from the rest of the news page to simulate a news reading experience. Informants were therefore aware that the photographs were press photographs and that these appeared in foreign-language VNA publications. The eight images or newspaper pages were supposed to be handed in the same sequence to every respondent and usually one-by-one. For every photograph the standard question was "What do you associate with this image?".

The sequence of applying the card-sorting exercise, visual elicitation or of asking the questions was basically flexible and depended also on the responses and behavior of the informant (Loosen 2016, 142). The interview guideline concludes with an open feedback question and request for possible follow-up (Meyen et al. 2011, 97).

In addition to the interview, I composed a short anonymous questionnaire (see appendix 9.1.3) with socio-demographic data (age, sex, education, profession, household size, place of residence) and on general media use. It was handed to respondents as paper after the interview or send as digital copy before the interview. The idea behind the questionnaire was to collect current data that was otherwise lacking in secondary literature on media use in Vietnam. Besides questions on socio-demographics, the questionnaire asked for estimates on the times of single media use per week, places and people with whom media were used, preferences for media content and motivations of media use. The generated data from the questionnaire serve as means of comparison to official statistics published by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam or figures provided by other market research

companies (see 4.1.3). The questionnaires also function as a source of validation or addition of information provided within the qualitative interview. Of course, however, these results can only be valid or cross-validated for the single cases in the sample and cannot be generalized to an entire social group.

Every interview was preceded and succeeded by taking fieldnotes on how I as a researcher got in touch with the informant, on the procedure of scheduling interview appointments, interview places, particular characteristics of the interviewee, conversational interview dynamics and other aspects that were not recorded but considered relevant.

#### *Interview conditions and data processing*

In Vietnam, the interviews were conducted at various places: respondent's homes or workplaces, in institutional settings such as meeting rooms at the university or the DAAD or public spaces such as cafés. Respondents were free to suggest and choose a place of their liking. I as the researcher wanted to ensure that the informant felt comfortable and secure at the place they picked; also locals would be more familiar with their own neighborhood and were believed to have a better understanding of what a good interview environment or a silent place would be.

The interviews were conducted in English, German or in a few cases in Vietnamese with the assistance of a student interpreter. Many of the interviewees had an extremely limited time scope due to job and family responsibilities. The average two hours of interviewing were difficult to integrate into their daily routines. A few interviews even had to be conducted in two appointments, during lunch breaks, in-between other professional meetings or late in the evenings after work or studies. This pressure was considerably stronger for my female interviewees who usually juggle job or studies and care work for their families.

As the qualitative interview is also a social situation and social interaction between interviewer and respondent, the place and presence of the interviewer (and interpreter) affects the interview situation and the generation of particular data. As Schütz (2016 [1974], 340-349) assumed, the researcher and his or her physical presence as a social actor creates a space that does not only determine the actions of the respondent, but also of the interviewer (for memory research, see also Jensen 2008, 258; Mihelj 2013). However, the qualitative interview situation also shares main characteristics of a conversation through immediacy and reciprocity (ibid.; Loosen 2016, 141-142). In order to break the ice on the initial meeting of basically two strangers, I would first engage in small talk about the place, the way to get there on the motorbike or about the person who had connected us. Some

respondents would also be eager in advance to know more about my own personal background, i.e. whether I came from East or West Germany. The latter quickly made apparent that for some the Cold War categories still had relevance, also in situating myself within the geopolitical spectrum. When ties to the former GDR existed, my outing as GDR-born generated common ground and trust. Yet, social hierarchies based on age and gender applied and had to be respected in the interview situation. Me as a white, Western female PhD student, who only speaks little Vietnamese, would be easily put and treated in the role as the one who needs to be taught and educated by male respondents older than me. Although adherence to the cultural protocol was probably not entirely expected from me by informants who were used to encounters with Westerners, it was yet important to not evoke situations of losing face for the informant. Sensitivity, empathy and utmost respect towards the interviewees was substantial to guarantee a smooth course of the interview. This cultural context, however, complicates and challenges the ability of talking about sensitive and critical issues. At the same time, the careful observation of such possible silences can indicate social taboos or instances of (intended) collective forgetting. Conversational constraints can reflect reproductions of stereotypes and taboos that also exist at societal level (Jensen 2008, 259). Similarly, as in research on family conversations on National Socialism in Germany, we also need to keep in mind that statements of particularly contested historical periods and events such as the civil war in Vietnam are never independently from the societal judgments and their dominant public representations at that moment (ibid.). Jensen (2008, 258) pointed out "interviews are therefore unique, unreproducible situations of a common fabrication of texts. In this intersubjective constellation data are not "gained", but commonly generated by the participants". Mihelj (2013, 64) calls this interview phenomenon a "process of co-construction". That is why these intersubjectively produced data can only be valid within this context — there is no pure or neutral data in this sense (Jensen 2008, 259). This context-bound nature of data deserves special attention and critical review in memory research based on interviewing (Mihelj 2013, 72).

Although I as the interviewer sought to reduce my own involvement to a minimum and motivate the respondent to keep on talking by nodding and listening carefully, this strategy did not work with every informant. Responding briefly to interviewee's accounts before the next question is posed, sometimes created a more natural conversation and eventually led to a more trusted and open talk on the side of the informant. Therefore, the

methodological rules of interviewing needed slight adjustments depending on the interview situation, the respondent and the cultural context.

We also need to acknowledge that interview data in the context of memory research usually is produced at two different analytical levels. Bohnsack (2010, 56) described these two levels as "performative" ("formal") level and the "propositional" ("content-related") level. In the context of memory research, the performative level can be considered as actual memory work during the interview situation. The informant remembers *in situ* while responding to the interviewer's questions. These statements can be regarded as 1st order constructions of individual and collective memories within the interview. The propositional level on the other hand refers to 2nd order constructions of collective memories, meaning that the interviewees themselves would retrospectively describe their own engagement with collective pasts. These reflections can either refer to mnemonic communication practices or forms as particular representations of collective memory. While the propositional, 2nd order level of generated data is helpful in reconstructing varying communicative actions and related content, performative-level data are richer for analyzing particular (mnemonic) narratives contained in interviewees' responses. Roughly, we can therefore discern between performative data (memory work in the interview) and descriptive data (described mnemonic communication practices in the interview). In the course of the interview, respondents often switched between these two modes of data generation which became particularly apparent during visual elicitation. At performative level, visual elicitation would also evoke more obvious emotional responses than the questions, adding an affective dimension to some of the collected data. Descriptive data on the other hand also often contained a normative note, revealing attitudes towards particular MCPs. Generally, the application of "creative elements" (Meyen et al. 2011, 97) or additional methodological tools has enriched the quality of data and prevented interviewee's fatigue given the large set of questions.

In the course of some interviews, it became quickly apparent that the recruitment via e-mail requests, snow-ball technique, other people's recommendations, short telephone calls or via messenger were also no guarantee for sufficient language abilities and common ground of communication. That was specifically true for the youngest generation, (GEN III), e.g. students who were eager to test their foreign language skills. With a lack of mutual understanding and no interpreter present in these cases (as language skills were presumed), the interviews were not carried out in full but kindly phased out. These interviews did not qualify for analysis.

The sound quality of interviews forced further discarding of research material from Vietnam. Background noises in the form of e.g. traffic noise, selling street vendors, loud music from the stores, conversations or karaoke music from neighboring households, can tremendously reduce the quality of the interview data even with a good interviewing device. Such noise can make the transcription an unsolvable task. In one case, the recording device was not activated properly and only half of the interview recorded. For these reasons, some of the interviews were discarded for analysis and not transcribed. The final research material for the analysis therefore encompasses 47 interviews (see Tab. 3). Although interviewees resided in the cities, their origins spread across the entire country (Fig. 4).

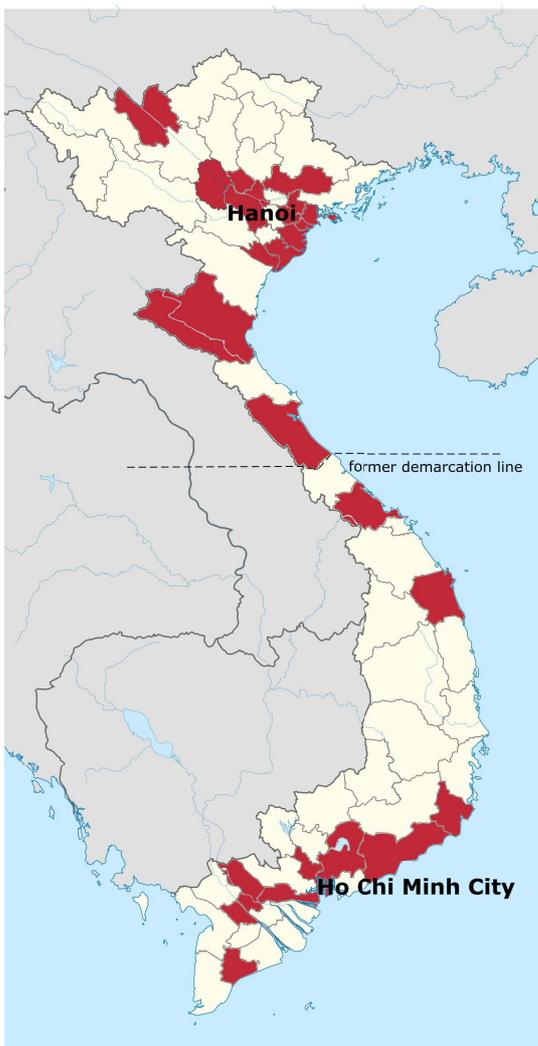


Fig. 4: Home provinces of informants marked in red<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The map is the author's modified version of the SVG map *Phu\_Tho\_in\_Vietnam.svg* published on Wikimedia Commons by TUBS on Oct. 25, 2011 under the cc by-sa 3.0 licence: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phu\\_Tho\\_in\\_Vietnam.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phu_Tho_in_Vietnam.svg) (accessed Oct. 18, 2020). The same licence applies to Fig. 4: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>. TUBS' SVG map includes elements that have been taken or adapted from the map: *Vietnam location map.svg* by Uwe Dederling: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vietnam\\_location\\_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vietnam_location_map.svg).

Name <sup>8</sup>	birth year <sup>9</sup>	home province	state	profession	gender
<b>HANOI RESIDENTS</b>					
Tao	1939 (est.)	Hai Duong	(Tonkin) FIC	retired (formerly engineer)	f
Phuong	1945	Nam Dinh	DRV	retired (formerly sewer)	f
Lan	1955	Nghe An	DRV	retired (formerly scientist)	f
Hop	1958	Hanoi	DRV	scientist/lecturer	m
Hang	1959	Hanoi	DRV	retired	f
Huong	1959	Thua-Tien Hue	RVN	teacher/lecturer	f
Minh	1959	Ninh Binh	DRV	scientist/lecturer	m
Cuong	195x	Quang Binh	DRV	scientist/lecturer/journalist	m
Duy	1970	Nam Dinh	DRV	engineer	m
Van	1974	Hanoi	DRV	scientist	f
Nguyen	1975	Hai Phong	DRV	scientist/lecturer	m
Hau	1975	Dong Thap	RVN	scientist/lecturer	m
Luan	1976	Lao Cai	SRV	scientist/lecturer	m
Ha	1978	Hanoi	SRV	lecturer	f
Linh	1979	Thai Binh	SRV	teacher	f
Nhien	1980	Nghe An	SRV	lecturer	f
Dinh	1988	Hanoi	SRV	scientist/lecturer	m
Phuc	1989	Phu Tho	SRV	journalist	m
Quynh	1992	Hanoi	SRV	student	f
Mai	1992	Thai Nguyen	SRV	student	f
Trung	1993	Hanoi	SRV	student	m
Nhung	1993	Hanoi	SRV	student	f
Nga	1994	Hanoi	SRV	student	f
Binh	1994	Hanoi	SRV	student	m
<b>HCMC RESIDENTS</b>					
Hung	1939	Dong Nai	(Coc.) FIC	lecturer	m
Giang	1952	Tien Giang	SVN	researcher	f
Oanh	1954	Saigon	SVN	entrepreneur	f
Dan	1954	Binh Thuan	SVN	retired (for. tourism manager)	m
Tuyet	1954	Quang Ngai	SVN	retired	f
Hieu	1957	Vinh Phuc	DRV	lecturer	m
Thu	195x	Ha Bac	DRV	retired	f
Kiet	1964	Quang Binh	DRV	lecturer	m
Duong	1970	Hanoi	DRV	researcher/lecturer	f
Hien	1971	Hanoi	DRV	company CEO	f
Cat	1971	Bac Lieu	RVN	manager	f
Thuy	1972	Saigon	RVN	interpreter/teacher	f
Tuan	1974	Hanoi	DRV	company employee	m
Vinh	1975	Hanoi	DRV	marketing employee	m
Nghia	1975	Hai Phong	DRV	entrepreneur	m
Trong	1975	Hanoi	DRV	entrepreneur	m
Phu	1975	Hanoi	DRV	project manager	m
Kim	1978	Nghe An	SRV	lecturer	f
Phong	1990	Dong Nai	SRV	researcher	m
Yen	1990	Ninh Tuan	SRV	marketing employee	f
Hai	1991	HCMC	SRV	student	m
An	1992	HCMC	SRV	student	m
Hoa	1993	Can Tho	SRV	student	f

Table 3: Overview of Vietnamese informants and their sociodemographics

<sup>8</sup> The names are all pseudonyms.<sup>9</sup> For respondents who did not indicate their birth year in the interview or on the questionnaire, the birth year was estimated (est.) from the interviewee's narrative account or had to be left undefined and was indicated with the letter "x" (e.g. 195x).

The audio interview material was transcribed on the basis of simple transcription rules as they are suggested by the audio transcription handbook (Dresing/Pehl 2013, 19-24). Systematic transcribing of the interview transforms the verbal, audio-recorded data into written records. Through transcribing, data is easier traceable and allows for transparent indication of which text paragraphs relate to particular data classifications and interpretations (Przyborski/Wohlrab-Sahr 2010, 162).

Since the study focused on practices and content and not on linguistic or paraverbal details (e.g. gestures), a basic transcribing system that settles between precision and readability was considered appropriate for the purpose of this dissertation. Readability in the context of this study was particularly significant, as most interview partners in Vietnam and in Germany were not speaking in their native language and the pronunciation of some words would not be according to general language standard. For readability mistakes in pronunciation were not taken into account and corrected in the transcripts. Within the original transcripts syntax was kept close to the original interview and altered only slightly if the meaning would be unclear for other readers. Cited paragraphs from interview transcripts in this monograph were edited more intensely if considered necessary for other reader's comprehension. All personal and place names were anonymized for privacy and security, except for public figures, the city names of Hanoi and HCMC and names of provinces (as larger regional entities).

The transcribed interviews as written records provided the basic material for further analysis of the phenomenon of "communicating memories in the everyday". The interview transcripts were examined by means of qualitative content analysis.

### **5.3 Qualitative content analysis of interview data**

Content analysis is an original and one of the most commonly applied methods in communication and media studies (Fürst et al. 2016, 210). It is a method that can serve (1) the analysis of media content and formal elements of communication and (2) the examination of interviews, focus group or observation data, transcripts, fieldnotes, archival documents, etc. (Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 333; Meyen et al. 2011, 139). In the context of this dissertation, content analysis serves the latter purpose — the analysis of interview data. In its qualitative variant, content analysis is distinctly recommendable for explorative, context-sensitive research endeavours (Fürst et al. 2016, 210). This fits the present study because there is little prior empirical knowledge about how people communicatively engage with collective pasts in Vietnam and socio-cultural contexts need to be respected. As a

method to analyse qualitative interview data in the form of transcripts it follows a systematic procedure that aims at transparency and intersubjectivity as standards of qualitative research (ibid., 213).

Since the linguistic turn of the 1970s, several variants of qualitative textual analysis developed, including hermeneutics (Oevermann et al. 1979), conversation analysis (Keppler 1994) or Grounded Theory (Glaser/Strauss 2008). Since the research question of this study primarily aims at the practice-level of communication and the conceptual repertoire-approach to the phenomenon of "communicating memories" already suggests some categories of analysis, I decided for a variant of qualitative content analysis that easily combines theory-oriented procedures with explorative openness to the research subject. Qualitative content analysis according to psychologist Philipp Mayring (2015) offers such a procedure and is often applied in German communication research while receiving less attention internationally (Fürst et al. 2016, 213). Nawratil and Schönhagen (2009) and Fürst et al. (2016) have further explicated Mayring's methodology for research purposes in communication and media studies. They saw the need for further discipline-specific development as in many aspects Mayring's procedure does not differentiate sufficiently between qualitative and quantitative steps of the data analysis (Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 337). Nawratil and Schönhagen (2009, 339) suggested five broad steps of qualitative content analysis:

- (1) defining research objective and research interest (theory, literature review)
- (2) determining a set of categories (definitions, descriptions, examples)
- (3) selecting the research material
- (4) analyzing data (techniques according to Mayring)
- (5) interpreting, discussing data and presenting findings

Applied to the context of this research project, these five steps are as follows (Fig. 5):

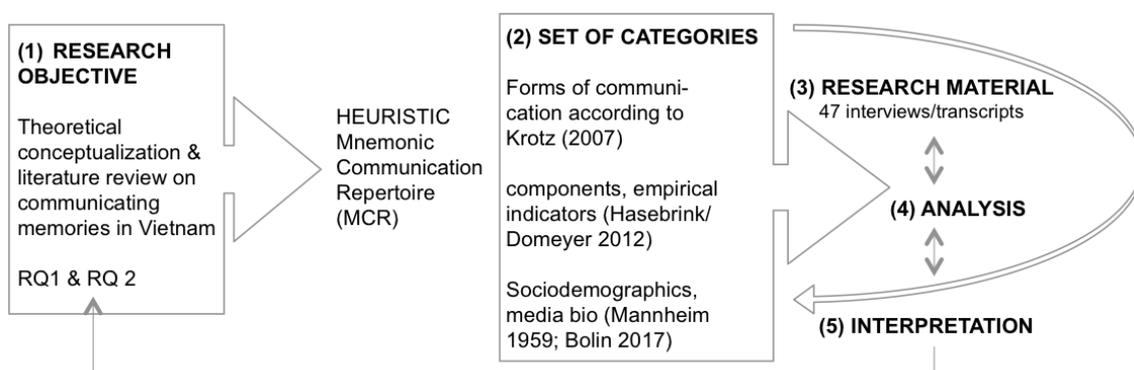


Fig. 5: Overview: procedure of qualitative content analysis

Step (1) has been worked through in the previous two main chapters of this dissertation and represents the theory-oriented part of the analysis according to Mayring (2015, 58-60). The theoretical chapter approached, conceptualized and narrowed down the scope of the phenomenon that I described as "communicating memories". The resulting research questions have been defined as "how do people communicate collective memories in the everyday?" (RQ1) and "how do they make sense of it?" (RQ2) applied to a case study on Vietnamese urban society. I have conceptually situated and specified this phenomenon as a subject of reception and appropriation research within the discipline of communication and media studies. The classification of prior mainly empirical communication and media research on collective memory from a user-centred perspective illustrated that their conceptualizations of the research subject and focus varied between first, memory as media and reception effects and second, remembering as communication practices, their motivations and social contexts. This dissertation ties into the latter and specifically asks for which mnemonic forms and practices of communication people utilize in the everyday? (RQ1.1). What are the motivations that drive and norms that regulate communicative practices of remembering (RQ1.2). The majority of studies concentrated either on particular historical themes and/or single media, but much less is known about how these are located in the everyday and relate to other communicative practices or different media socializations. Although the open and broad approach of this dissertation in not predefining topics or particular media is a risk for the coherence and depth of certain aspects, the very same openness is sensitive to the individuality, multiplicity and cultural specificity of possible responses. This way, it might draw a more encompassing picture of people's lifeworlds or social realities than in picking just one television show or movie.

Prior research also suggests that (media) socialization and similar generational locations provoke social differences. Both factors are dependent, but cannot be entirely explained by the socio-demographic factor of age alone. The development and availability of media technologies and socio-political circumstances need to be taken into account as well. Another minor research question therefore inquires whether different generational patterns evolve on the basis of these three factors (RQ1.3). The study further seeks to scrutinize the meaning of these practices in people's lifeworlds (RQ2). In order to empirically research "communicating memories in the everyday" along these four minor research questions, I suggested a repertoire-approach to memory research as it is one of the few approaches that goes beyond media practices and integrates interpersonal communication with its notion of communicative practice (see 2.3). Second, the approach has already been probed in prior

memory research on Holocaust or German occupation repertoires (Finger 2017; Kroogsgard 2017).

Step (2): As the definition of collective pasts remains thematically open and up to the informants, I suggested to empirically reconstruct so-called "mnemonic communication repertoires" (MCRs) in order to assess how collective memory is communicated in the everyday. The conceptualization of MCRs given in chapter 2.3 provides the basis for step (2) of the analysis (Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 339). MCRs are based on an understanding of communication (Mayring 2015, 29) that is user- and practice-centred and is sensitive to how people make sense of their own communicative practices (individuals' agency) (Hasebrink 2015, 5). Besides its conceptual value, the repertoire approach also comprises an analytical framework (Hasebrink/Popp 2006) that can be utilized for assessing MCRs.

The analytical framework already suggests criteria of analysis that can serve as deductive main categories. According to this approach deductive main categories include **components** of communication repertoires such as types of media technologies or communicative actor, media genres or communicated topics. Since a classification of broader types of communication is missing in the original framework (ibid.; Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012), I borrowed from Krotz's (2007a, 90-92) typology of communication, including face-to-face communication (between human beings, without media technologies), standardized media communication (mass communication), interpersonal media communication (human communication facilitated by media technologies) and communication with interactive systems as in gaming. Another main category within this framework are so-called **empirical indicators** such as number of contacts, preferences and frequency (Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012, 760; Hasebrink/Hepp 2017, 368-369).

Prior empirical research on memory, media and generations (Bolin 2017; Hepp et al. 2014) indicates that (media) socialization makes a difference in communicative patterns in the everyday. Basic sociodemographic categories such as **age, gender, education** are therefore applied. For a more encompassing understanding of their socialization, biographic data such as **family background** or childhood or first **media experiences** need to be assessed. For communicated representations of collective pasts in the form of topics and narratives, prior historical, anthropological and political research on Vietnam has identified **master narratives** such as heroism, national struggle for independence, victories against "foreign aggressors" (Taylor 2001, 29; Tai 2001a; Margara 2012) and dominant **topics** such as achievements of the CPV, Ho Chi Minh as heroic figure or military successes. Prior

scholarship also indicated that information and commemoration seem important and common **motivations** for MCPs. These deductive categories (in bold) are theory- and literature-based and serve as first orientation criteria and initial drafts of a system of analytical categories. Qualitative content analysis, however, allows for further alteration, differentiation and extension of these deductive categories (Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 338).

Step (3): After having narrowed down the sample and thus the number of available transcriptions as research material (see 5.2), the 47 transcripts were each read through sequentially. During this first read, text paragraphs relevant to the RQs, meaning those that refer to any form or practice of communication were identified and marked in bold font. The transcripts were then uploaded to MAXQDA, a software developed for the purpose of qualitative data analysis. The transcripts represent single cases of informants that cover the range of characteristics relevant to the research question, namely (pre-defined) generation and residency. According to these two characteristics, transcripts were grouped with the help of the software. The unit of analysis in each interview transcript is a single statement of an informant that make up a coherent thematic entity. Such entities can vary syntactically and in length, ranging from a single linguistic phrase to several sentences.

Step 4 – analysis: For the actual content analysis of identified relevant paragraphs, Mayring (2015, 65-69) suggests three basic techniques of analyzing and interpreting a text that facilitate to reduce and structure large amounts of text and to develop a system of analytical categories. These three techniques are (1) summarizing, (2) structuring and (3) explication. These techniques also ensure that the formation of categories is transparent and rule-governed (ibid. 2008, 9-11). Although all three are independent (Mayring 2015, 67), it is common that these techniques are applied within the same analysis. In this study, each interview was first analyzed sequentially, using all of the three techniques. (1) Summarizing primarily aims at reducing the text to its core information and thus gaining a higher level of abstraction (ibid.). The reduction of an analytical unit and assigning a category to specific part of the text is always an act of interpretation, as the categorization does not only rely on the written word but also the more subtle meanings (subtext). In the context of the interview transcripts at hand that means extracting the main statements of respondents' accounts. The basic means of summarizing is paraphrasing the text or interview statements by leaving out fillers or words that do not carry essential meaning for the phrase (Mayring 2015, 71; Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 341). Using MAXQDA, paraphrasing cannot be realized by using a table format as often suggested in methodological literature (Mayring

2015; Fürst et al. 2016, 220) because the codes are directly applied to the specific text paragraphs of the usually unmodified transcript. That is why case summaries for each respondent and interview transcript were compiled using the "notes"-function. Case summaries included the main deductive categories mentioned above (step 2) and the paraphrased content of relevant paragraphs. As the paraphrased content was already sorted according to the main deductive categories within these case summaries, the second technique of (2) structuring was already applied in parallel. Structuring evaluates extracts of the text according to specific criteria and filters text parts according to already existing categories (Mayring 2015, 67). As the three broad forms of communication (Krotz 2007, 90-92) as components of mnemonic communication repertoires (MCRs) have already been determined as deductive analytical components in advance, paraphrased text was for example structured accordingly within the case summaries. This kind of structuring technique is therefore based on content, not formal criteria.

The third technique, (3) explication, means that the interpretation of particular paragraphs, terms etc. requires additional research or material in order to be explained. In the context of this dissertation, explication was often necessary to i.e. clarify Vietnamese expressions or cross-check general media preferences on the questionnaire.

While structuration was applied within the case summaries, it also remained the main technique in working with the main interface of MAXQDA. Within the main interface, categories were also generated inductively and close to the text, i.e. standardized communication was differentiated more precisely into specific media practices such as *watching TV*, *reading books*, *listening music* upon their occurrence in the transcripts. Through this procedure of inductive categorization of the interview material, prior deductive categories were refined. Other relevant parts of the material that cannot be assigned to an existing deductive category through structuring such as *peer* or *mnemonic group communication* were subject to inductive category formation. These inductive categories that specify the social actors and participants of communication rather than the way of mediation i.e. lie across Krotz's categories of *face-to-face* and *mediated interpersonal communication*. They were, however, necessary in order to clarify RQ2 that addresses the meaning of MCPs for social relations in the everyday.

Another example for an inductive category is **normative views and evaluations** that do not refer to an informant's own MCR. This could e.g. be statements on present-day history education in Vietnam although the respondent has already completed school education a long time ago and today's history textbooks are actually not part of his or her own

repertoire. It can also i.e. refer to commemorative TV shows that someone has heard of, also has an opinion about it, but never actually watched it. Summarizing such statements under the category of normative views is yet fruitful and important as it provides us with greater context information about why people also consciously decide against or refrain from particular ways of engaging with collective pasts. For the purpose of such inductive category formation, I mainly applied the summarizing and explication techniques according to Mayring (2015). The inductive category formation led to completely new categories but more commonly to the differentiation and specification of broader deductive categories such as **topics of mnemonic communication**.

In this analytical process, the software facilitates the generation of new categories, the merging of similar categories into main categories or the differentiation of main categories into sub-categories thanks to its tree structure and individually designable color scheme for single and groups of codes. It also provides space for notes for each category, in which definitions, coding rules and core examples can be documented. Summarizing these notes then serves to develop coding guidelines in the course of category formation and analysis of the transcripts. It also allows the researcher to permanently compare, alter or discard categories. Clicking on a particular category, a synopsis of all text segments that have been coded with this category across cases will display. This table enables a comparative, contrasting analysis between cases and axial coding across cases (Glaser/Strauss 2008) and eases to grasp the dimensions of a single category (Kelle/Kluge 2010, 20).

In these first rounds of textual analysis and category formation, I followed a sequential procedure case by case from the beginning to the end of the interview until about 50% of the material was analyzed. These 50% covered cases of each generational and residential group of interviews (GEN I-III; Hanoi-HCMC). Via single case analysis a preliminary set of deductive and inductive categories was developed and consecutively complemented through the investigation of further single cases. After the analysis of about 50% of the interviews the system of categories was further differentiated and revised by two strategies: (1) the paraphrased case summaries were used to develop more specific dimensions of forms and practices of mnemonic communication. (2) Axial coding for particular main categories such as *standardized communication* was applied across cases to refine and grasp the various dimensions of each category. Having extracted all relevant paragraphs about forms of communication also allowed for a more thorough analysis of mnemonic communication practices (MCPs) and their motivations. Since text paragraphs for axial coding need to be exported to Microsoft Excel and cannot be coded within the same MAXQDA file, the

Excel tables were printed and axial coding continued by hand with marking text and taking notes on paper. The newly generated codes then had to be reintegrated into the digital file of MAXQDA in order to continue the coding process for the rest of the cases.

During the application of the existing drafted coding scheme to the remaining interview transcripts, the scheme stayed subject to constant revision. The formation of particular categories had to be justified and revised throughout the entire analysis. If a new category was added to the scheme, the previously analyzed material needed to be examined again in reference to the new category. That is why qualitative content analysis usually requires several reads and rounds of analysis of the research material (Nawratil/Schönhagen 2009, 341). The methodological aim of qualitative content analysis of developing a system of categories that is exhaustive and complete has provoked a large scheme of main and sub-categories. Particularly for explorative qualitative research projects with relatively broad research questions such as this one, the multitude of potential ways of coding and comparing has been a major challenge in the process of analysis. Not all of the created codes, particularly those with little abstraction, were in the end useful to respond to the research questions and provide theory-building at a more general level. A summary and overview of the most important categories of the coding scheme can be found in the appendix (see appendix 9.2.2).

Step (5) - interpretation, discussion of findings: In order to ease the, interpretation, discussion and presentation of findings, MCRs of some cases were visually reconstructed on the basis the case summaries with the assistance of the software Mindnode. The visualizations illustrate the entirety and relationality of the single elements of MCRs from the subjective perspective of the respondent. They also depict social relations by documenting social actors involved in their mnemonic communication. The visualizations partially adapted the circular structure suggested by Hasebrink and Domeyer (2012, 767) but added more detailed notes for each component to the visualization. The visualization of MCRs is primarily based on components as forms and technologies of communication. These are essential for understanding the basic pattern of MCRs and will therefore be further discussed as a typology of forms of mnemonic communication in the findings section (see 6.1). The visualizations, however, left little room to actually explain practices of "communicating memories" and their related motivations.

A typology of MCPs is therefore represented in the second main findings chapter (6.2). The typology is oriented towards respondents' articulated reasons and sense-making of their own practices on the one hand and the social acceptance and positioning of these

practices in regard to dominant versions of collective memory in Vietnam on the other hand. These typologies represent forms and practices of mnemonic communication as ideal types according to Max Weber (1966, 18). That means that some of their characteristics are particularly foregrounded for the purpose of abstraction and are never fully congruent with every single form or practice (Bohnsack 2010, 49-50). Ideal types as these therefore always lay in between empiricism and theory (Kelle/Kluge 2010, 83). The presentation of data will furthermore assess whether the distribution of these typical forms and practices vary between generational groups by comparison (RQ1.3). In order to contribute to further theory-building in communication and memory research, the discussion of the findings shall go beyond the mere description of these typologies on "communicating memories" as the only answers to the research questions (RQs1.1-3). Therefore those core categories shall be selected from the scheme that contribute to prior existing academic debates and theory-building beyond the case study.

Mayring (2015, 124-125) summarizes the challenges and criticism of meeting general quality standards of reliability and validity in the context of qualitative research projects. Because a full agreement in intercoder reliability in qualitative research settings is unlikely, Mayring (2008, 13) suggests a more flexible procedure that also contains "elements of discursive validation". However, this proposed proceeding still requires a second coder. Since resources for a second coder were lacking for this project, validation was sought through the discussion of the category system and its rules in discussions after presentations in PhD colloquia or on other university's visits (i.e. UCR, 29.11.2017). Further, standards have been met here by thoroughly explicating the design of methodological tools for collecting and analyzing data (guidelines, coding rules), describing the conditions of data generation and selection as well as documenting all analytical steps from the research questions to the interpretation of data in this section. Presentations and the use of varying methods (interviewing, visual elicitation) sought to further enhance the quality and validity of this qualitative research project. Meeting the quality standards of qualitative research, however, should also require to be transparent about limitations and challenges of meeting these standards in the process of qualitative research.

#### **5.4 Critical reflection: Research context and challenges**

A few of the limitations have already been addressed in the discussion on particular research methods, methodological tools and sampling. Certainly the greatest challenges in

conducting this research were researching in a cultural setting that is not my own and in a political environment that does not fully grant free speech.

Although I had lived a year in Hanoi, working for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as a volunteer from September 2011 to September 2012, I was still more cultural outsider than insider when I returned on the last days of December 2014 to conduct my fieldwork. From an anthropological perspective, my relation to the field as white German female was therefore an *etic* one (Lohmeier 2018, 31). If it had not been for my previous stay in Vietnam, accessing the field and reaching out to interview partners would have been more difficult. Although in this *etic* position, I was not necessarily perceived as "neutral" (*ibid.*) due to my East German background, particularly among elder informants who had benefitted from the cooperation between socialist fraternity states in past or sympathized with communism. I was more cautious about revealing that personal information in HCMC where I rather expected to meet people who or whose families might have sympathized with the former anti-communist regimes. When I met a few of those my then more general Western background might have actually been perceived more neutral as compared to unknown Vietnamese researchers. As a Westerner or German I had no direct history or certain family background related to the civil war in Vietnam. I also had no ties to the CPV. Given this *etic* position of mine and the insurance of their anonymity, some respondents were quite open in their criticism of the past and present communist regime–criticism that they would otherwise only share within their most inner circles as they told me (e.g. Dan; An).

Despite my previous connections and experiences as an expat in the field, I attempted "going [more] native" this time and I decided to live with Vietnamese families throughout my fieldwork in Hanoi and HCMC. The families I lived with, however, were not subject to the study. Yet, some of my hosts facilitated my fieldwork in providing contacts organizing interview meetings or responding to questions I had on culture, language or politics.

Due to time constraints and financial limitations, I refrained from a fully ethnographic approach that would usually have required local language acquisition and longterm-research in the field (Ayaß 2016, 336). While I had attended a Vietnamese language class in 2012 and had been in touch with German-Vietnamese communities in Germany, my language skills remained basic and insufficient for thorough observations or interviewing in Vietnamese. The lack of language skills limited the scope and depth of access to the field. It also needs to be taken into account, however, that standard Vietnamese is based on the Northern Vietnamese dialect that differs from other regions in Central and Southern Vietnam. While

the Northern and Southern dialects are mutually intelligible, it is more difficult for Northern and Southern speakers to understand central dialects. Understanding regional dialects is therefore a great challenge for learners of Vietnamese. At the same time, these language variations mean that Vietnamese usually recognize people's origin according to their dialect.

Due to financial constraints I worked with Vietnamese college students of German language and culture as interpreters instead of professional ones. In the urban centres of Vietnam where international cooperations in trade and commerce are booming, interpreters are in high demand. Professional Vietnamese interpreters would charge on average 100 US Dollars per day at the time the fieldwork was conducted. The contact to student interpreters was also facilitated by the DAAD and they belonged to the top students of their class. The advantage was that the interpreters would also speak the local dialect of the region, creating a sense of familiarity and locality in the interview situation despite my presence as a foreigner. These interviews usually created different social dynamics. Such dynamics also depended on the previous relationship between interpreter and respondent. In those cases where the interpreter facilitated an interview and knew the informant, the conversations were quite open due to the previously existing intimate relationship. In other interviews where everyone was a stranger to each other social hierarchies became more apparent. In one interview for example the informant, who asked for an interpreter but was knowledgeable of German, started to correct the interpreter's translations and interrupted the flow of the interview multiple times. Despite prior briefings and institutional recommendations, it often became obvious during the interviews that interpreters would act at times autonomously in summarizing certain responses, translating more freely or adding own explanations to the questions. Sometimes, words could not be translated in German instantly and were later added in the transcript. The interviews conducted with the assistance of interpreters were also transcribed by the same interpreters. That had the advantage that they could revise some of their translations and that they were already familiar with the interview content.

The advantage of working with interpreters was also that they as "emic" participants in the interview (Lohmeier 2018, 30) would be sensitive to cultural codes, regional or local specificities that I was possibly be not aware of. For me as a cultural outsider, it was sometimes hard to grasp where boundaries about certain topics were. Particularly, in regard to traumatic experiences or political issues, it was very difficult to sense when a line is crossed. If a topic became uncomfortable, the response was likely to be very general. An

issue in this regard was also the common understanding of the interview as a test on historical knowledge although my introduction stated otherwise. Not knowing the answer to a question or admitting to having not understood a question can equal losing face and therefore becomes critical for the validity of data. Interviewees might nevertheless answer the question.

Except for the interviews with the interpreters, all interviews were conducted in foreign language to the informants. Although they were fluent in the foreign language, this circumstance can lead to limitations in expressing one's thoughts. Me as the interviewer therefore always also encouraged respondents to use their mother tongue for an expression that they otherwise found hard to describe or did not have the translation for.

Besides these challenges, Kumar, Hug and Rusch (2006, 213-214) further noted that we need to keep in mind that the verbalization process in communicating memories in particular is constrained by sociolinguistic factors such as tenses, time structures, the filling of semantic and grammatical gaps in order to keep a story coherent and comprehensible, story schemata, conversational rules, the social status of participants. Such sociolinguistic factors in the context of this study particularly applied to the first autobiographical question that was often answered by a linear narration about people's lifecourse. The phrasing of the question, however, also provoked this narrative linearity ("from birth, childhood, etc. [...] up to now.").

Another challenge in conducting the interviews and reconstructing MCRs in the everyday is the subtle nature of daily (communicative) routines (Hartung 2010, 98). As they often are essential part of everyday life, they are not necessarily consciously reflected. It was therefore important to include examples and pictures as other triggers to the conversation. Despite the repertoire-approach and conversational triggers, however, people could not always recall the sources of content they would talk about. For the reconstruction of MCRs, it was difficult in these cases to relate the content to a particular practice, actor or technology. We also need to acknowledge the reconstructed nature of interviews and that respondents' might also distort or err in their accounts. Since memories are understood here as a communicative construction anyhow, authenticity or truth does not apply as a criterion to the responses of informants. Their own assigned subjective meaning, perceptions and opinions on collective pasts remain the center of interests in this study. Although respondents' accounts might also be considered to be oral histories of particular times (Magin/Oggolder 2016), it was not the method of choice because the study's purpose

was not to reconstruct certain historical time periods or events per se, but how they are remembered in present contexts.

Kumar et al. (2006, 211) therefore also pointed out the meaning of the situational and research context in researching communication and collective memory. Despite the relationship between respondent and interviewer that already have been discussed, this situational context is dependent on the methodological tools (interview guidelines) and also the socio-political context in which the interview is carried out. The interview guidelines as the main methodological tool was designed in a way that was supposed to be as open as possible and culturally sensitive. For that reason, the interview guidelines did not for example concentrate on the history of the "Vietnam War" as a possibly too Western perspective but were thematically more open. This granted openness, however, also led to a broadness of topics in the research material that to some extent complicate the analysis and comparability of data. Finding that balance between openness and thematic focus is a commonly known challenge in qualitative social research (Klein et al. 2016, 5). Thematic focus in this regard was often compromised given claims of holistic research of the repertoire and non-media centric approaches. Using additional methodological techniques such as card-sorting and visual elicitation heightened comparability and created thematic focal points in the interview. While I kept the newspaper design of pictures for a more authentic news reading experience, I would isolate or mark the images more clearly if I did the study again. The other newspaper elements such as text, headlines and other images created at times distraction and unnecessary, less focused comments. Also the varying quality of images should be taken into account more carefully and image size should be adjusted accordingly.

Apart from the use of cards and elicitation, other more precise questioning techniques could have probably encouraged a stronger thematic focus, reduced interview length, minimized the timely burden for respondents and eased the process of data analysis. It is, however, difficult to determine such a thematic focus in explorative research settings. In retrospective, a small-scale pre-study could have assisted in this regard. With an average length of two hours per interview and 67 interviews conducted in total during four months in the field (including interviews with journalists not analyzed here), a great corpus of research material was gathered. Given this huge amount of interview data I asked and paid Vietnamese students for assistance in transcribing. In retrospective, I ethically question this procedure of outsourcing some of the transcription work as I made myself complicit to a system that yields social and economic inequalities in academia and on the global labor

market. My trusted interpreters further facilitated contacts to transcribers. The transcriptions varied in quality depending on the sound quality of the recording, the clarity of pronunciation of speakers in the interview and language skills of the transcriber. Technical circumstances that were least thought of in advance but are particular challenges of recording interviews in Vietnamese cities is the tremendous noise caused by street traffic and the omnipresence of fans due to the climate that can mute entire phrases on the recording.

Despite these conceptual and technical challenges, the particular political context in Vietnam requires administrative precautions for research. As a foreign researcher, I naturally needed a visa to stay and conduct research in the country. I was able to cooperate with a national state university VNU USSH that I had already visited during my work as a volunteer. The university processed my visa application and has been collaborative throughout my stay. Besides the common documents such as research proposal and recommendation letter, I was also asked to provide lists on organizations I wished to collaborate with. The university provided official letters of introduction that facilitated contact to the respective institutions.

Although I heard from other researchers' difficulties while conducting research on ethnic minorities and journalism in the field, my work was not obviously monitored or impeded. A degree of uncertainty about possible monitoring remained as I once witnessed the presence of secret police at a conference on democracy models in Asia. Instances as these alerted me to generally keep a low profile and stressing the cultural aspects of my work. Usually I would not mention the political and journalism dimensions of my work.

Backed by German institutions and the university I felt quite safe but was worried about how my work could affect the people who collaborated with me. On one occasion, my scientific interest got into conflict with the responsibility for those who supported me. By the end of the fieldtrip, I asked a local friend to accompany me to an interview with a dissident journalist. Having underestimated the risk back then, I later considered this behavior towards my friend irresponsible. Although the meeting had no consequences on any of the participants at the time, the journalist was already under surveillance. The journalist was put under arrest in May 2020 in the course of a crackdown against dissident journalists and political activists (Human Rights Watch, 19.6.2020). While of course the political climate fluctuates, this example also provides an idea of what drastic measures the CPV leadership can take when it sees its power threatened. In an authoritarian research environment, self-censorship within the generated data therefore needs to be taken into

account. At the same time, such mechanisms of self-censorship can be indicative of social taboos and collective forgetting. How collective memories are communicated in Vietnam's urban centers is presented in detail in the following findings chapter.

## **6 Findings: Forms and practices of communicating memories**

This chapter presents the main findings of the analyzed qualitative data collected among middle-class residents in Hanoi and HCMC. Applying a modified version of the repertoire approach in the qualitative data analysis allowed to reconstruct and classify forms and practices of "communicating memories". This classification of forms and practices provides a broad overview about how urban Vietnamese engage with collective pasts in the everyday (RQ1; RQ1.1). The classification of forms and practices is based on informants' own accounts and subjective meaning making of their communicative actions. Not in every case did respondents relate specific communicated content back to a specific source. This can be considered a consequence of today's complex media environments, the ubiquity of mediated content, the subtlety of the everyday and ability to recall in an interview situation. Yet, this chapter shows how patterns of MCRs can be reconstructed across single cases. These patterns consist of typified forms of communicating memories face-to-face, in and with mass-media and interpersonal use of media technologies (6.1). Practices of communicating memories are presented multidimensional: the first level of abstraction basically reflects people's ways of engaging with collective pasts from a critical perspective and questions of power (6.2). It clarifies the question through which practices people in Vietnam usually appropriate and position themselves in regard to dominant versions of collective memories in Vietnam as they have been discussed previously in the literature review (see 4.2). At the second, lower level of abstraction, practices of communicating memories are classified according to informants' own subjective motivations and explanations why and how they acquire, negotiate or contest different variants of collective memory. Both, forms and practices of mnemonic communication are embedded into social contexts and linked to social interactions. While these social contexts always refer to the particular study of communicating memories in urban Vietnam, the two highest levels of abstraction of the categories presented here also allows for applying the coding scheme on

mnemonic communication within other socio-cultural contexts. It is also important to note that these forms and practices have to be regarded not only synchronically but also diachronically as respondents reflected on both, current and past practices.

## **6.1 Forms and contexts of communicating memories**

This first subchapter discusses particular forms and contexts of communicating memories as specified inductive sub-categories of broader deductive types of face-to-face, mass-mediated and interpersonally mediated communication (see Krotz (2007, 90-92). These communicative forms as abstract types represent the single components of mnemonic communication repertoires (MCRs). Usually components refer to communicative contacts of any kind (Hasebrink/Domeyer 2012, 760). The repertoire approach and qualitative analysis encourage researchers to take into account and stay close to informants' own phrasing. As a result "communicative contacts" as components of MCRs can be referred to on varying levels, including mediated content, specific programs, infrastructure, media technologies, institutions or social actors. In the course of abstracting, summarizing and typifying the categories, forms of mnemonic communication as MCR components were reduced to social actors involved in the communication process (e.g. family) (6.1.1), types of mnemonic media representations (e.g. history books) (6.1.2) and ways of interpersonally connected media communication (e.g. social media com.) (6.1.3). The components therefore show which actors are relevant for people when they engage with collective pasts in the everyday and in which contexts these encounters with collective memories occur. Moreover, the analysis assessed themes related to these MCR components – in other words, the topics about collective pasts that people talk about or appropriate through and with media. In this regard, the following chapter answers partially RQ1.1 on forms of mnemonic communication and RQ2 on social relations involved in mnemonic communication. This overview also provides a basis for assessing how these components relate to one another in MCRs. The latter point can usually not be covered by empirical studies focusing on a single media technology, representation or communicative form only.

### **6.1.1 Communicating memories face-to-face**

Communicating memories in direct interpersonal communication among Vietnamese urbanites predominantly occurs within the social realms of the home, school, work and public commemorative places. The greatest depth and variety of data addresses collective remembering in and through family communication. The data therefore indicates that

different varieties of familial conversations are one of the most common ways of engaging with collective pasts in everyday face-to-face encounters. These face-to-face encounters thematically concern mainly entangled versions of national and family history as well as knowledge about family rites, familial values and norms. A culturally specific form of face-to-face familial communication that had mnemonic value for respondents was singing.

Communication with historical experts appeared to be a second common face-to-face encounter with collective pasts. Considered historical experts were particularly teachers, tour guides and time witnesses outside the family. The data further illustrates that memories of common pasts are communicated among peer groups of various kinds in everyday contexts.

Less prominent in the data set were engagements with specific interest groups that formed first and foremost on the grounds of a common mnemonic purpose (mnemonic interest groups) such as preserving a particular cultural heritage. Intercultural face-to-face encounters that provoked an engagement with collective pasts, e.g. by the question of where someone comes from, occurred also in everyday contexts but were less common.

#### *6.1.1.1 Familial conversations*

Face-to-face family communication on collective pasts in urban Vietnam takes place in the domestic spheres of the home, at ritual and commemorative places inside and outside the private realm and on (touristic) trips to different commemorative sites. At home, the most common occasion for talking about the past appear to be in the course of familial routines such as common meals, particularly dinner, in preparation for or during practicing cultural rites or during common media reception. Familial conversations about collective pasts can also be prompted by particular places or memory objects. Thematically, these familial conversations addressed various family histories against the canvas of national history in Vietnam, particular characteristics of family members as well as knowledge about rites and traditions. The data also reveals insights on what is not shared within the family and potentially forgotten.

##### *Family talks during meals and other familial rites*

A common recurring pattern and form of family communication and collective remembering among Vietnamese respondents are table talks during common meals. Common meals as Keppler (1994, 51-52) pointed out create an occasion for family members to come together on a regular basis, discuss issues of concern and share experiences. Common meals therefore constitute a social space. The range of topics, the

prioritization and avoidance of topics provides insights on the characteristics of families (ibid.). In the context of Vietnam, Avieli (2012) described these social spaces as "rice talks". Usually dinner is the most important and sometimes only familial gathering of the day in Vietnamese families (Dang 2008, 173).

The empirical data shows that past-related table talks are hierarchical and initiated by elder family members. They often address their witnessed experiences of food scarcity and hunger during war and postwar times. Often these conversations were started in situations when elder family members felt the served food is not valued enough by the younger or they wanted to stress that every family member needs to contribute to the common efforts and well-being of the family.

*Sometimes at dinner I tell my grandchildren from my generation that we often had nothing to eat during this time. I advise my children that they should do meaningful things for the family and for society, at mealtimes and also in their daily activities.<sup>10</sup> (Thu, \*195x, DRV)*

Similar to other descriptions in the data, Thu's example illustrates the intergenerational nature of such family talks. Memories are communicated by members of the elder generational groups in the family to the younger in the form of their life experience. The living conditions of the past serve as benchmark for comparisons with present conditions. In Vietnam, it is quite common that three generations live in the same household so that family members of three generations are likely to participate in talks during meals. The example also shows a certain parallelism between the family and society as a whole. That is a typical parallelism in Confucian thought where the family is considered a micro cosmos of the whole society. In this sense, doing something good for the family equals doing something good for society (see also Tao, l. 42). Sharing food and talking at the table therefore also creates a social space for articulating familial and societal values at the same time.

Despite common everyday meals, there are other rites in Vietnamese families that serve as occasions to engage in family talks about collective pasts. These occasions are particularly death anniversaries (*ngay gio*) of deceased close family members and Lunar New Year (*Tet Nguyen Dan*). Family rites on these days are particularly devoted to pay respect to elders and worship family members who passed away. The worship ceremonies usually include food offerings after which the family members gather and talk about everyday life. In some cases they also reminisce about the life and personality of the commemorated family member.

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<sup>10</sup> German-language quotes from the interview material were translated into English language with the assistance of DeepL software. These translations can cause slight variations from the original wording.

*[...] according to tradition, we organize their death days with small meals and we invite relatives and we eat together and we remember the events that have a connection with the deceased, that is, experiences we have in common [!: can you give an example?] my grandmother. We organize such commemoration days after the lunar calendar and my grandmother was a vegetarian and therefore we cook only vegetarian, vegetarian things and all my uncles, aunts, they come to us, because my father is the only son and according to tradition, only the oldest son has an altar in the house and organize such family celebrations. So, the aunts, uncles, my cousin, they come to us and (...) we sit together, we talk about our lives and we remember the grandmother and so on. And it's always said that the grandmother was very good and it's a pity that we had no recording of her singing and so on [...]. (Thuy, l. 67)*

*My father often told me, he usually tells many stories on my grandmother's memorial day. [...] He told about how our grandparents lived, what they did and his love for them. (Tuyet, l. 187-190)*

In these cases, personal characteristics and emotional ties dominate collective remembering. It is rather these characteristics that are perpetuated across generations within a family than people's actual involvements in the larger historical process. On these occasions, family histories are usually not embedded in a broader sociopolitical and historical context and remain largely unrelated to official narratives of national history. In these cases, vernacular memories (Bodnar 1992; Pickering 2013) remain disconnected from national, historical narratives and are rather embedded in the context of cultural rites and traditions.

Everyday media routines such as watching TV together in the evenings can also initiate family conversations about the past. Phuong (\*1947, Nam Dinh, DRV) for example described how she would talk about war experiences when the family saw news coverage on war in other countries (l. 58).

In a few cases, singing of family members had mnemonic value for respondents in the study. The singing is usually also embedded in family rituals such as death anniversaries or daily routines such as bringing children to bed. Mostly songs sung were lullabies or regional folk songs as the examples of Hoa (\*199x, SRV) and Thuy (\*1972, RVN) show.

*Other occasion is the anniversary for the dead people in dead day we have serve things, serve dishes for them and then we gather each other, talking, [...], singing especially in the South. We love sing a lot. [...] We use bowls, chopsticks as the musical. [!: What kind of song do you sing then?] The folk songs. (Hoa, l. 264-266)*

*Well, my grandmother, she could sing these songs quite well and she always sang such traditional music, which you can't find any more. In the past, she used to sing me to sleep with lullabies. And she has a very beautiful voice and she originally came from Hue, from the middle of Vietnam and this music is traditional music from the middle of Vietnam [!: how do you call it?] so "Ca Hue", "Ca Tru", "Ca Hue" and (clearing your throat) so I went once to Hue and I tried to find a CD from this traditional music. Because my mother, my grandmother died 15 years ago. So you could not watch this music on TV or something like that. I hoped that I would find something like this in Hue but I couldn't find it everywhere, there is pop music (laughter) modern music everywhere. I thought it was a pity. this music is very slow and sad - the folk music that my grandmother sang. So very sad, very slow, but typical Vietnamese (laughter) - it is the essence of culture. So I grew up with it and that's why I have such a special connection to it, but yes, I found it a pity that I can't find any recording of this kind of music at all, not at all anymore. (Thuy, l. 53)*

The mnemonic value of singing in these examples is three-fold: first, the folk songs sung are from a macro level perspective products of cultural heritage that are preserved in the

performative ritualized act of singing. Second, the singing is also a more personal commemorative act as part of familial ancestor worship at the micro level. Third, the singing can invoke particular family memories as a cognitive effect. This effect occurs because the skill of singing certain folk songs is treated as a special characteristic of a commemorated person. In the latter case, the music is strongly personalized although it is a culturally collective good.

Singing as a particular form of face-to-face communication and as mnemonic practice is clearly under-researched so far. Although Pickering and Keightley (2015) provided insights on music's mnemonic and affective power to be back in a certain moment in time and how its value is personally assigned, their research usually addressed commercially produced music by a specific artist. Folksongs, however, do usually not have a particular interpreter. From a communications point of view, we know very little about the practice of singing as a mnemonic act or music as the trigger or subject of collective remembering. In the data, songs sung in face-to-face situations within the family proved to be vivid childhood memories among respondents. The memories of the songs expressed strong identification with the related person or that past moment in time in one's lifecourse. In the case of traditional folk songs in Vietnam, their different variants of music are often related to a particular Vietnamese region and can therefore be identification with a person's origins. Some of these songs exist only in an oral tradition and have not been recorded as Thuy (\*1972, Saigon, RVN) described. This lack of materiality and fear of losing a valued memory increases the personal relevance of that very component in Thuy's MCR as there is no mediated equivalent that could complement, refresh or substitute it. Keightley and Pickering (2014, 583) have actually observed a similar wish for materializing collective memories as material objects in the wake of digitization. People in both examples want to secure the prospective access to collective memories via material objects and thus their perpetuation. In the case of Thuy's failed search for recordings of *Ca Huế*, it seems as if loss of that memory cannot be prevented in the longrun. This memory is confined to her own consciousness as she is not able to sing the songs herself. So what remains in her family might only be the mediated knowledge about certain folk songs and their names, but without the actual enactment. The experience and thus emotional connection to this music and singing eventually gets lost and cannot be shared or perpetuated. The lack of materiality of memories as objects and inability to perform or enact songs that represent collective memory can therefore forge collective forgetting.

### *Family talk on memory objects*

Besides everyday family rites and routines, memory objects can provide a trigger, occasion or reference point for family conversations about the past. These objects can be media products such as photographs or media devices but also other material objects that carry symbolic meaning for an individual. Mai (\*1992, SRV) for example described how she discussed with her grandparents and parents about which media devices to keep in the household.

*For example, in my family, my grandmother and my father want to hold something is very old, yes, from long time ago. But for us, for me and, especially for my younger sister, she said something like this, it is, it's not beautiful, we should not hold it, we have many things more modern, more beautiful, we do we choose some old things in the house or my parents can hold something like old radio, to keep his memory, but younger sister don't like it, she likes something modern. (Mai, l. 325)*

In this discussion, the elder and younger family members negotiated the value of media devices as memory objects. The value they individually assign to them is created in relation to the individual experiences with the specific object and its relevance for present and assumed future needs. The example clearly illustrates a generational gap in the evaluation of the mnemonic value of the particular media devices. It hints at the fact that varying media socializations do make a difference in present issues on media use. Family talk in this case actually provides a space for negotiating what should be preserved and collectively remembered in the family. This conversation thus has actually greater normative than informative character about engaging with the past.

More common, however, are family talks on pictures and photographs as both media and mnemonic objects. Such pictures can be part of a collection of private family photographs; they can be exhibited and talked about in public spaces such as museums. For family photographs, it needs to be noted that photography has been in fact a luxury commodity throughout the lifetime of many Vietnamese respondents as they grew up during wartimes or the period of state subsidies in Vietnam. Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) explained how this lack of visualization complicates the passing on of memories of his own lifetime:

*I just share my son and my daughter how I feel, I sometimes I share with them something normal in the life. my grandfather is die when I am very small, [...] That's why I teach them in the past, but of course we are the poor country, at this time we don't have the picture, just the rich people have the picture but we don't have, I cannot show them picture. Right now you can show them the picture everywhere, so it's good but it, in the past, in my time also, we don't have, just sometimes. (Duy, l.139)*

In families where photographs of former times exist and have been kept, they provide visual cues for telling family and national histories. They facilitate sharing collective memories by adding visual impressions to the spoken word.

*My father always lives with past, in wartime and then sometimes he likes to tell about his time for us. ...] for example, his friends in the war and then sometimes he has a photo album and then show who is that, and when and where and what he did with the people. (Hieu, l. 287-289)*

*And we have to say we said that why we have it, why we have it and we always tell our children about the dad, about the mother, yeah, mother in law, father in law, my mother, my father, yeah, yeah, show them, show them the picture and maybe I, I still keep the, the clothes which my mother bought for me, yeah. Although now I I don't wear it but I don't, don't leave it out. [...] Above, this is the picture of my father and my mother in law, yeah. [...] We hang there to memorize the children that if we don't have them, you don't have your father and mother, [...] (Huong, l. 188-190)*

In both examples, photographs are treated as visual "evidence" (Kuhn 2000, 186) in intergenerational familial conversations about times the younger family members have not experienced. Particularly, in Hieu's (\*1957, Vinh Phuc, DRV) case, the photo album of his father serves as "mnemonic aid" (van Dijk 2007, 100) and "occasion for performances of memory" (Kuhn 2008, 284) in the conversation. At the same time, it is a record of events that happened during the First Indochina War. Reviewing the pictures for Hieu's father is also the attempt to bring back the past (Hirsch 2012, 22) into the present moment. In both examples, the images of dear friends and family represent "a trace of something lost" (Kuhn/McAllister 2006, 1) that is still held on to in the present. Particularly in Huong's (\*1959, Thua Thien-Hue, RVN) account, the drawing of an genealogical line within the family and the interdependency of familial generations is foregrounded.

#### *Family conversations during trips and visits*

Traveling, short trips or visits of meaningful places are a common activity for middle-class families in Vietnam. In some cases such touristic, ideologically or spiritually led visits trigger family conversations about the past. It is mostly family members who connect a particular life experience with those places and thus encourage the visit of a certain site. In most cases these places are also public places of commemoration and thus spaces, where individual stories and experiences are confronted with public versions of memory. Hieu (\*1957, Vinh Phuc, DRV) recalled how he traveled with his father to a former war battlefield in Tay Ninh province. His father served in the Northern Army as a doctor and asked him to visit the place where he served during the war.

*Last time, about 10 years ago, my father and I, we are in the war place, at that time my father was there and then visited there and then he told his time, more than 10 years. This is Tay Ninh province and then here is Sai Gon and then Binh Duong. Tay Ninh is on this side near Cambodia. [...] This place is also a tourist place at the moment, they say in Vietnamese "Bo Tu Lenh Mien". This is a place where the general worked at that time and then the war is organized by the Viet Cong side, from the north side. (Hieu, l. 291-295)*

In other cases such family talks during visits can be more exclusively related to the family's history such as the hometown of one parent or grand-parent. Such family trips to places of origin that are also particularly common during *Tet* holidays provide an occasion for family

members to share stories about their origins and connect to the places and soil of the ancestors. In both cases, it depends, however, on the motivation and intention of family members to share and ask questions about place-bound memories.

*Perpetuation of family histories in direct communication*

Apart from these social contexts in which family conversations and singing occur as engagements with collective pasts, the data reveals a range of themes of mnemonic family communication that is not further contextualized by respondents. This kind of data sheds light on what kind of topics and knowledge is perpetuated or not among family members. Generally, informants provided more encompassing historical knowledge and family histories that is historically set in the second half of the 20th century. Historically, that time span also covers the age range of the respondents, indicating that the presence of time witnesses is still crucial in communicating memories in face-to-face familial settings. In this tendency, the data on mnemonic family talk actually does show empirical support for the Assmanns' (1994; also J. Assmann 2008) characterization of communicative memory as spanning three generations and about 80 years of time. In the data of this study, the boundaries of this time span become apparent in for example how little or vaguely family histories of feudal times have been passed on.

*My grandfather was a student who spoke French very well. However, he did not tell us anything on his own initiative, also no stories about the war. (Oanh, I. 156)*

*No in Vietnam at that time, yeah, people did not talk about that. they did not know where Germany was or France was. [I: explains question further] Yeah, when I was about 6 or 7 years old, the war was there, but my parents didn't say anything. They didn't know. They didn't understand anything where the war came from and who fought whom. they didn't know. [I: what was their professions?] Farmers. Almost all Vietnamese in the South then were farmers. (Hung, I. 186)*

The two examples provide different explanations for these boundaries and the little attention the colonial period receives in familial collective remembering: (1) the time witnesses within the family did not initiate talks about that stage in their lifetime as Oanh (\*1954, State of Vietnam) reported. (2) Respondents would not consider their parents' everyday accounts about the past as oral history of that time period as it is rather associated with sociopolitical developments in the country instead of everyday farming live. Hung's (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) statement also suggests that everyday farming live also provided little space for communicating memories within the family. Despite the support in regard to covered time span, the concept of communicative memory, however, ignores the fact that family conversations about collective pasts can be anecdotal, but can also cover or negotiate that kind of institutionalized knowledge, the Assmanns (1994) define as cultural memory. While Oanh's example showed that communicated memories in the

family are sometimes not embedded into historical and sociopolitical contexts at all and concentrate on personal characteristics or skills, other examples of familial talk integrate their own family's history into the official and institutionalized success story of the Vietnamese revolution and struggle for independence:

*In my family, there is a hero, also martyrs in the war against the USA. He was the child of my uncle... His name was Viet. In Hai Duong, there is even a street named after him. He destroyed many military posts from the USA. He was great! (Tao, l. 58-60)*

Tao (\*1941, Hai Duong, FIC), who was born into an intellectual family in Tonkin, French Indochina, took pride in her cousin and family's contribution to the DRV leadership's cause. In her account on her family's history, her narrative aligns with official, hegemonic narratives of martyrdom for the fight against "foreign aggressors" (Taylor 2001, 29) in public memory in Vietnam. The US is described as the prime enemy, ignoring the RVN as a legitimate war party and therefore silencing the civil war aspect of the 2nd Indochina War.

The degree of openness to which Vietnamese families talk about lived war experiences varies from family to family. Open talk depends on the type of war experience addressed, the traditionality of the family, personal education and historical interest of an individual and the social conventions about what can be said and not be said within the family according to familial roles and social norms (e.g. particular norms about respect).

Time witnesses of war times, which experienced not only the 2nd Indochina War, but normally also the Cambodian-Vietnamese War (1978) and Sino-Vietnamese War (1979), were usually aware about being selective on what kind of experiences they share in family talks. The data showed that elder informants make conscious decisions about which personal memories they perpetuate in the family. Experiences that are too traumatic or painful often remain unarticulated. Tuyet (\*1954, Quang Ngai, SVN) e.g. described her approach of leaving out too harmful memories of war in conversations with her grandchildren.

*I did not live in a war zone, but I was told a lot about it. I still tell my grandchildren about my generation, but not too painful memories. (Tuyet, l. 202)*

In that account, Tuyet also distanced herself from the war or avoided going deeper into the topic by stating that she had no direct war experience. It is possible that the presence of one of her grandchild during the interview also caused hesitations in going in to detail on the topic. At the same time, her statement shows that war experience is rather understood as witnessing violence and military conflict rather than the everyday experiences of a

society at war aside the front lines. While official public memory concentrates on military and party achievements (Giebel 2004, xviii; Großheim 2008, 2018), the data revealed that narratives of loss, fear and hardship during wartimes persist (see also Margara 2012) and are quite prominent in familial talks on 20th century wars in Vietnam.

*My parents also talk some stories when the US, they bombed the university that my parents worked for. Some of my parents' colleagues already died because of a lid bomb. (Tuan, l. 217).*

Civilian deaths and negative consequences of war described in Tuan's (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) account have been mitigated in official state narrations and commemorations (Kwon 2006, 20) but live on in vernacular family memories. In these cases, vernacular memories present alternative narratives to public memory and thus "alternative renditions of reality." (Bodnar 1992, 15). The same holds true for memories of communist suppression, social discrimination and reeducation. While the events of the fall of Saigon and the unification of the country are positively framed and commemorated in public memory (Sanko 2016b, 13), the negative experiences some families made in the course of the socio-political reconstructions of the South are still subject of family talks, particularly among time witnesses in HCMC. Such familial histories were also shared for example among family members that previously had been separated because of the division of the country, but reunited after the 2nd Indochina War ended (e.g. Phu). Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) from HCMC e.g. learned from his mother about the escape and imprisonment of family members after failed attempts to flee from the country:

*My mother's family leave. They leave. Sometimes she told me how they try to leave. Very fun story from at that time. At that time, they have (?), a popular sentence. Like I don't remember completely because she talked this story long time ago. "Mot la con nuoi ma, hai la ma nuoi con, khong la con nuoi ca." It's like that: If I can run to the other country, I will make money and I support you to live here. It come from young people. Their parents too old. They cannot go to other countries with them. Even they, they don't know where to go to, where the better nation because they just run to the ship and they catch like any ship in the middle of ocean. [...] Because my mom taught me. Because the reason why other people in my mom's family in German right now, they do that and some of them, some of my uncle, my aunt in German right now, they already fail one or two times. They already in the prison. (Hai, l. 207-209)*

Publicly marginalized collective memories of escape and imprisonment as in Hai's (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) report prevail in the intimate spheres of the family through conversations with affected family members or witnesses of repressions. By describing this familial memory as "fun story", however, Hai indicated unease in telling it and mitigated the severity of his relatives' situation. In the same account, he spoke of escape a "story of people helping each other" (Hai, l. 207) and thus acts of solidarity. This way, Hai seemed to foreground the morally good of his family's escape while distancing himself from considered illegal acts. That his account is free from any critical perspective of the living

conditions back then that would legitimize escape indicated the social unconventionality of this kind of collective memory.

This first subchapter has shown that family conversations are a prime type of communicating collective memories face-to-face in Vietnam. It largely occurs in the form of familial talks during meals and other familial rituals such as ancestor worship or common media reception. Mnemonic objects such as photographs or trips to touristic sites can further trigger and be integrated into familial talks. While some family histories were embedded and sometimes even aligned with narratives of Vietnamese national history (e.g. Tao; Hieu; Minh, l. 215), other perpetuated family histories were more personalized and remained isolated from their socio-political context (e.g. Oanh; Thu, l. 151; Cat, l. 144). The latter usually applied for the historical time period of French colonization and instead focused on skills, occupations and personal characteristics of elder family members. Traumatic and unconventional collective memories of wartimes and the postwar period are selective and their excerpts intentionally perpetuated from elder to younger family members. Most of the mnemonic family conversations are hierarchical, intergenerational talks.

With regard to time span and its face-to-face nature, familial conversations match the Assmanns' (1994) conception of communicative memory with the great exception that cultural memory in their sense is also subject and context of family talks, e.g. during museum visits. The empirical data from Vietnam indicates that such a distinction in the context of family conversations is bound to the presence of time witnesses. Without the presence of living time witnesses, family histories were more focused on personal characteristics and disconnected from Assmanns' (1994) conception of "cultural memory" or the broader socio-political context. For instances, where people's lifetimes were closer to the historical time periods of interest and generational gaps to time witnesses narrower, communicative and cultural memory in the form of institutionalized national history were more often interlinked.

This entanglement of "communicative" and "cultural memory" in the everyday becomes particularly apparent in face-to-face encounters with historical experts who often mediate institutionalized knowledge about the past along with own personal experiences.

#### ***6.1.1.2 Conversations with historical experts***

In the empirical data, conversations with historical experts are a second prominent type of communicating memories face-to-face in Vietnam. This category encompasses conversational encounters with individuals who hold specified knowledge about particular

historical time periods outside the family sphere. This knowledge is based either on specialized education, profession and/or on lived experiences. Experts that match this definition in the interview material include teachers, tourist guides and time witnesses (other than family members). Conversations with any of these personae represent particular lay-expert relations in varying social settings to be discussed in the following.

#### *Educational talks with teachers*

The teacher-student relationship plays a key role in the construction of collective memories in general and on Vietnamese history in particular. Although Welzer et al. (2002, 13-15) argued in the German context that family memories provide certain frames of understanding history and thus school education has a less strong impact on the individual, we need to take into account that the teacher-student relationship in Vietnam differs from Western conceptualizations. Often the relationship is quite intimate and yet hierarchical as teachers are treated with utmost respect. In Vietnamese education, students usually do not object teachers' statements and opinions. It is also very common to present gifts and pay visits to teachers' homes for Teacher's Day (*ngay nha giao*) or during *Tet* holidays. The data showed that the nature, content and appropriation of Vietnamese history as one form of collective memory in school largely depended on the style of education of the teacher. While some teachers presented alternate views and anecdotes, others stuck to the standardized syllabi as provided by MOET. According to Confucian thought, "knowledge imparted by the teacher and from the textbook has been commonly viewed as incontestable and rigid and students are conditioned to passively accept knowledge rather than being provided with opportunities to creatively and critically engage with knowledge." (Tran et al. 2014, 95) Depending on the stance of the teacher, diverging from official historical narratives at school or university could therefore have serious disciplining consequences or enlightening effects.

Kim (\*1978, Nghe An, SRV) for example recalled how her teacher taught his university class about critical literates, including the Nhan Van-Giai Pham collective, a political movement of intellectuals and writers that criticized the land reform (1953-1956) and called for democratic reforms in the DRV in the 1950s (Zinoman 2016, 188-191; Großheim 2007).

*When I was a student, I have a teacher, so the teacher will teach literature and he taught to us a lot of stories about intellectuals in the past who were in prison, who were very good, but who were under the pressure of communist sometimes like that. (Kim, l. 25)*

For some respondents as in Kim's case, teachers have been the source for more personal or alternate views on the past in an authoritarian system that has silenced critical voices and movements against communist leadership throughout Vietnamese history (Zinoman 2016, 188). Such alternate views can be based on past personal experiences, adding to hegemonic narratives (e.g. Nhung) or they reveal information on more sensitive topics of the past that are not written down in the textbooks (e.g. Kim).

The teacher-student interaction is not always an enlightening one, but can also be restrictive in the way history is appropriated. In an assignment on a revolutionist heroine Chi Tu Hau, Van (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) received the lowest grade. Her father was called into school. The issue was that Van had deviated from socialist ideology in her essay on the revolutionist.

*Then I was study in high school, I was writing in one examination about Chi Tu Hau. Chi Tu Hau is like one lady, is very famous in the history of Vietnam who was have... I think 5 or 6 child, she still involve in during the war and she do so many good things to protect people living around her and also contribute a lot of work for the Party. [...] then I was writing one sentence that "but from my point of view I don't think this is the good choice for her" [laugh together] and then my... at that time my paper was get very worst mark, because if you compare, right?, about your family, about the Party, it is something else and then people around you, then you should protect your children first, right? It's the first priority, but she even use children to protect the others, to protect the Party, like a this kid will be sent he to see... the army for the other side and come back and told her about that then I feeling like a, she use her kids for her own [...] so I was write it [laugh together] and my... and latter on, the bad thing is my teacher giving this paper to my father [...] and she even invite my father to have very, a very serious talk (laugh) about me [...]* (Van, l. 48-52)

In her essay, Van put the family first before the Party and accidentally caused a clash between her family and the school authorities. In this incident, both socialization agents, teacher and father, disciplined her ways of thinking. As a highschool student in the 1980s, she was limited and clearly guided in her way to interpret Vietnamese national history in alignment with the CPV's ideology. Although both examples refer to different times and levels of education, they show that teachers are crucial agents of socialization and within their position considered credible authorities of communicating collective memories in their classes. Kim's (\*1978, Nghe An, SRV) account further shows us that school education in Vietnam does not necessarily equal monolithic teaching or reciting official public history although textbooks and syllabi are standardized. Instead the school or universities can be social spaces of negotiating collective pasts depending on the ideological conformity of teachers. It shows that teacher's can and have made use of their intellectual capital and elite position to comment on certain critical issues in Vietnamese history, deviating from official narrations.

*Informative talks with tour guides*

As second group of historical experts represented in the data are tour guides. Mobility and travel opportunities for families increased in post-reform Vietnam with the raise of average incomes and the reconstruction of infrastructure. It has become more and more common for members of the growing Vietnamese middle class to travel domestically and abroad (Earl 2014). According to the research data, such trips are either intrinsically motivated and out of own interest in visiting other parts of the country or for spiritual reasons; they also can be initiated by family members, friends or the employer. For the latter, excursions with coworkers to tourism and historical sites are not uncommon particularly for state employees. Face-to-face encounters with tour guides at historical sites in Vietnam are therefore not only a matter of international tourism but also spaces of meetings Vietnamese of different ages, backgrounds and experiences. Similar to the argument that has been laid out in reference to teachers, tour guides can either fulfill the role of multipliers of official public history or that of time witnesses who inscribe their own personal narratives into the tour (Schwenkel 2009, 97-100).

Hoa (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV) summarized her experiences of touristic journeys to historic sites as follows:

*For the older to memorize the past, that we can go out and see, go to history places, the national places and from that we have a tour guide. They tell us about what is it in this place, what the past is and what person we have to admire, we can admire them and what are their results like that. From each trip, we can collect more information about our past and relate it to future as well. [...]. Uncle Ho as well for the first of course. Vo Thi Sau. Yeah, she die very young to fight back French warriors. Le Van Tam that he burned himself to the oil center of the French in Vietnam and maybe this teenager - Phan Dinh Giot. I don't remember his achievement. Just remember the name. Many things I am not good at history. (Hoa, l.86-106)*

Hoa's (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV) report significantly pointed out that she did not only learn about historical places and the related events and time periods from the tour guide, but particularly about the variety of heroines and heroes connected to the place. Noteworthy is her expression of "what person we have to admire" (Hoa, l. 86) that indicates a certain obligation and affective dimension of collective remembering. In recapitulating her visits, she particularly stressed the role of heroic figures whose names she was well familiar with. Her account supports the continuous centrality of the personality cult in communicating memories in Vietnam (see 4.2.1). National heroes — in Hoa's case, all revolutionary heroes — serve as idols not only in history, but their achievements represent values that are supposed to be inspiring for present-day contexts as well. Hoa does not question the status of national heroes and heroines, neither the obligation to admire them. The information provided by tour guides is perceived as factual and trustworthy. They seem to be assigned a

certain authority over historical knowledge due to their profession. In this case, the tour guides seemed to have served as multipliers of state narratives that Hoa reproduced in her statement. Among others, Hoa's (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV) account indicates that the belief in heroic figures as social role models is not only a matter of state propaganda on official occasions, but it also reaches into various spheres of daily life in Vietnam such as traveling. Yet, how deeply they are ingrained in the daily lives of the post-reform generation remains ambiguous in this example. While Hoa recited the names and achievements of national heroes by heart and expressed her obligation, her next phrase reduced their meaning again to historical knowledge ("I am not good at history." Hoa, l. 106). She also makes no references from the description of the heroes and heroines to her own personal life apart from historical trips. Further investigation on the role of heroism will therefore be necessary in the course of this study.

#### *Talks with time witnesses*

While family members, tour guides and teachers can be time witnesses at the sites they introduce (see also Schwenkel 2009, 97-100) or of the historical time periods they teach about, the spectrum of time witnesses is not covered by these three groups. As a third group of experts, time witnesses are generally people who have first-hand experience about and have lived through certain historical time periods. Since the other groups have already been discussed in further detail, time witnesses in this paragraph usually refer to individuals that respondents do not have a familial or professional relation to. In the empirical data, this definition includes face-to-face encounters with war veterans who do not belong to the (nuclear) family, friends of the family or colleagues at work.

Time witnesses generally receive high credibility and recognition thanks to their first-hand experience and the way they impersonate events that are otherwise abstract historical information (Finger 2017, 149-151). As mediators they can facilitate the access to a time or experience not lived. Through their physical presence and their own witness accounts, they have the ability to create empathy. This empathetic connection as described by student Quynh (\*1992, Hanoi, SRV) who encountered war veterans before.

*When I see the old veterans with many small medals here on their clothes, yes I feel very... I adore them so much. Because they have their youth and the peace of Vietnam ... [!:] and when do you see and when do you meet war veterans [...]?] on television and sometimes when I walk on the street. That day the veterans clubs, they get together and then the meeting of veteran and when I walk in the street I can see them, just see [yes, ok] maybe they come to Uncle Ho mausoleum [yes] or maybe I come to Ly Thai To Square. (Quynh, l. 81-83)*

Although, Quynh did not particularly recall a conversation with them, the quote still shows the respect and status she attributes to them. Interestingly enough, Quynh applied the same

narrative of "admiration" that Hoa (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV) expressed in the context of national heroes. Both national heroes and veterans therefore seem to be subjects of obliged commemoration. As she referred to public meetings of official veteran organizations, Quynh's notion of admirable veterans addresses only revolutionary veterans in the sense of official state memory politics (see 4.2.1). While her example illustrates the value of veterans in collective remembering, Yen's (\*1990, Ninh Thuan, SRV) account provides more insights on the actual face-to-face communication.

*When I was a student, I used to join with our school or our school also remind us on that day. We usually visit some soldiers in our area and to, because my highschool is located near by a, you know, a place that soldiers working and are living there? [...]a military base, We stay quite close there and in normal days, especially in July 27<sup>th</sup>, we come there to visit them to, yea, to talk with them, to give them gifts and to sing to them. [...]they always love to share stories, [...]When they meet the enemies and how they gather to them and how, how hard the conditions that time were. (Yen, l. 114)*

Yen's (\*1990, Ninh Thuan, SRV) report on the face-to-face interaction with war veterans reveals the institutionalized context in which her talks with these particular time witnesses takes place. The close location of a military base near her school nurtured cooperation between these two state institutions. Students visit veterans at the base on Veteran's Day and veterans visit commemorative and educational school events. While Yen stated to have been intrigued about hearing about the witness accounts of veterans, she recalled rather vaguely what their stories were about. Apart from what both young women appropriated from their face-to-face encounters with veterans, in both accounts the social convention materializes that attributes authority to particularly revolutionary war veterans in communicating memories about Vietnam's war past that needs to be respected.

### 6.1.1.3 Peer conversations

Peer communication is a third type of communicating memories face-to-face in Vietnam. In the context of this study, peers are understood as trusted friends and colleagues. In socialization research, peers have been considered prime socialization agents besides the family during adolescence — even more significant than but in close interaction with media experiences (Barthelmes/Sander 2001, 27-28). But how do these relationships play out in collective remembering? In the interview material, face-to-face peer communication is generally represented less than family communication or communication with experts. Peer communication as represented in the data is usually not intergenerational but takes place among persons that share a similar experiential location (Mannheim 1959, 291). The mnemonic content of peer communication therefore usually refers to shared or commonly lived experiences that are addressed by the participants of a conversation. Huong (\*1959,

Thua Thien-Hue, RVN) for example reported how she meets former school friends regularly to reminisce about the time of their young adulthood.

*These friends are, were together with me at university, ah no, no at school. They are very good. When I have told you above that when I went to Russia, I was not at home and my friends often come here, come to my parent house to help my parent. [...]they wash cloth, they go to the market, they went to the market. They do everything, they did everything. Now I love them very much, now we meet each other once a month, once a month, every month, we meet each other. We talk about the past, we laugh (laughter), we cry and talk, talk a lot. (Huong, l. 74)*

Huong's (\*1959, Thua Thien-Hue, RVN) account indicates that the common experience, the social and affective relationship built throughout the years of youth and young adulthood is the basis for present collective remembering in their peer group. It can be noted that this social relationship is not only nurtured because of experiencing same events but also on mutual support in times of absence and need. In another example, Hung (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) stated that if he wanted to think about the past at all, then he would talk to his friends.

*To remember to go back to the things in the past, I talk to my relatives and my friends, especially the friends who went with me to the same school. relatives, friends and people I met, especially people who taught at the same school [teacher training school] or things like that. (Hung, l. 113)*

Both examples refer to peer groups that have shared particular life stages of youth, particularly young adulthood during professional education and significant career steps. Peer communication thus seems to be particularly valuable for those respondents who shared important life stages with their peers, e.g. veterans, participants of abroad programs or common professional experiences. Peers therefore usually refer to school or university friends or colleagues from work. The observation that peer communication is less prominent in the research material can have several reasons: the interview guidelines did not include questions on peer communication per se as it was the case with family communication. The relation and obligation to the family is still stronger than to peers in the Vietnamese context. There might also be a distortion due to age: whereas some of the students might still live through such significant lifetime periods and peer communication is more devoted to contemporary life events, older respondents might easier identify important peers in their own biographies. Beside their own family, children and jobs, elder respondents have to make particular time and occasions for them to meet and might take more conscious decisions on remembering with them.

#### **6.1.1.4 Conversations in mnemonic interest groups**

A fourth less common type of communicating memories face-to-face in Vietnam are conversations in particular mnemonic interest groups. Not every face-to-face encounter

that forges engagements with collective pasts, however, is one that takes place in an intimate, professional or touristic setting. The data showed that there are also events at which special interest groups gather without prior social ties among members. Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) for example, who naturally took great interest in Vietnamese traditional culture, attended a public meeting on the preservation of traditional music of *Quan Ho* in Vietnam.

*For example, is last month I have a workshop In Hanoi, we share together about the... what's challenges with the culture for the young people Vietnam. The some old people professor, they talk that is now there's many problems with the music, for example the music, they cannot hear, they cannot adapt with the music with the young people. (Duy, l. 12)*

Duy's example differs from expert communication because in his account there are no particular knowledge hierarchies. Everyone who participated in the event wanted to contribute to the topic of preserving cultural heritage. Collective remembering in this example represents a strongly normative discussion about what cultural heritage and thus one form of collective memory is and should be in the future. In contrast to the previously discussed types, these kinds of mnemonic talk concern the macro level of society and do not necessarily link personal memories as it was the case with Thuy's (\*1972, Saigon, RVN) grandmother. Face-to-face communication in mnemonic interest groups does not necessarily rely on strong and previously knit ties, but on a strong identification with a thematic historical topic or cause. The interest in the topic must be that high that the person is willing to reserve leisure time to engage with people he or she does not necessarily know, but share and advocate similar interests. Initial social ties are then built on the basis of a thematic interest in the past and not necessarily on the basis of common experience or familial connections. The age and background of group members are therefore less relevant, but instead a common cause in memory work. This type of communicating memories face-to-face shows a high level of commitment and willingness to fashion collective memory beyond the familial realm.

#### **6.1.1.5 Intercultural communication**

The last type of mnemonic face-to-face communication is usually prompted by intercultural encounters with people of different nationalities. Due to the recruitment strategy (see 5.1), many informants had been educated, lived and worked in international settings. Living, studying or working abroad, for example, ultimately leads to personal encounters with the local population on various accounts. Such intercultural encounters can provoke the introduction of one's own national background, including the history of

one's country. In Van's (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) case such a meeting resulted in a situation in which she started to negotiate public memory in Vietnam and her own identity.

*I was very proud that I am Vietnamese at this time and I only, I think everyone in this world know about Vietnamese and I think Vietnamese people is very famous in the worlds because we have so many, like a, newspaper and some information come from radio and then it's prove that Vietnamese people is the best people in the world during that time (laugh) and I only realize that it's not like a what we learn from the past, when I was travel to Korea and Buddina, at this time, I think it was 2000... 2001 and I am already, how many years old... twenty, twenty six years old and I travel to Korea and working at Korea [...] and then on the street there are one Korean man ask me: "where are you from?" and I said: "I am from Viet Nam" and he said, he asked me: "what is Vietnam?" and I am very, like a surprised, how can this person do not know about Viet Nam, Vietnam is very famous [laugh together]. (Van, l. 44)*

The quote illustrates how Van's prior socialization in the family and in school had forged a particular national pride based on what she had learned and commemorated about national history. On the basis of her own socialization and historical education, she readily assumed other Asians to be naturally familiar with the success story of her country that had managed to fight for its independence several times despite the military superiority of foreign powers. It has to be acknowledged, however, that such face-to-face intercultural encounters, particularly for the war generation and post-unification generation are more typical for the highly educated and the one's with good state relations and an influential network.

Instances of intercultural communication as engagement with collective pasts did not only occur abroad but also domestically in interaction with international students or tourists in Hanoi and HCMC. Respondents who were interested in international relations and Vietnamese history took pride in sharing the histories of popular historical sites in the country with international visitors. Partly such initiatives were intrinsically motivated, in other cases this kind of intercultural communication is additionally encouraged through summer campaigns by Vietnamese educational institutions. Nhung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) recalled her participation in the campaign.

*[...] two years ago I was at the, I was a free tour guide at some historic places in Hanoi. It's like a campaign, summer campaign in my, at my uni and I think some uni have the same campaign, too. When I have to be that free tour guide, I have to learn about the history. So I have to find out the information to tell the foreigners and other ones about it. So it's a way for me to learn and to know about the history. (Nhung, l. 221)*

While Nhung pointed out the assets of volunteering at historical sites, the state educational system has here also created incentives for students to engage young people with national history beyond the school setting. University volunteer programs such as these are also meant to educate good citizens (Doan 2005, 461). Yet, in the middle-class households of Vietnamese urbanites, students have more options to research and chose their historical information from a variety of sources that cannot be entirely controlled by educational

institutions. In this regard, intercultural communication can take place in institutionalized settings, but both examples indicate that these spaces still leave room for individual actions, reflections and contributions to what is perceived as collective memory about the country. Mass media still play a significant role in this perception and public construction.

### 6.1.2 Communicating memories through mass media

Besides communicating memories face-to-face, standardized communication (Krotz 2007, 91), namely the interaction with mass media, is still crucial in everyday engagements with collective pasts. The following chapter provides an overview of the main types of standardized communication that respondents' appropriated and contributed to their understandings of "the past". These types encompass Vietnamese state media, textbooks, music, exhibited media, inter- and transnational media. The mediated content of these types is not necessarily factual or historical per se. We have seen from prior research (Welzer et al. 2002; Ebbrecht 2010; Finger 2017) that also fictional media formats can contribute to individuals' perceptions of past times. Essential in the coding procedure was that people assigned mnemonic meaning to that content by relating it themselves to the past in their own descriptions of the content. This typification is not only based on analyzed interview but also visual elicitation data since the technique incorporated news photographs.

#### 6.1.2.1 Vietnamese state media

Prior research has shown that the circulation of historical and commemorative content in Vietnamese mass media has been regulated strongly by the political leadership and its state institutions (see 4.2.1.3). Despite partial relaxations after *Doi Moi* reforms, certain master narratives prevailed in public media (Tai 2001a). In respondents' general media repertoire historical media did not feature prominently. In people's MCRs, however, Vietnamese state media were still a relevant or at least familiar source of historical information despite the wide range of other media contacts available to (urban) Vietnamese today. The term Vietnamese state media as used in the context of this study is clearly a generalization that basically includes all Vietnamese media organizations with a state license (required by all to operate legally) or operated by state institutions and their distributed content. This also includes online platforms run by these media outlets. I am aware of the fact that the degree of actual state involvement might vary between single media institutions (see e.g. McKinley 2011).

Among the different forms of Vietnamese state media, historical state television programs and movies dominated the MCRs; radio programs and newspapers played a much less significant role. People usually are not always able to trace the particular source from which they gained certain historical information. That finding confirms earlier research that suggested "[...] a single memory [does not] depend on a single source: rather it is an amalgam of several sources, often confused and almost always interrelated." (Teer-Tomaselli 2006, 227) In the Vietnamese case, this is not solely an issue of recalling the details of media use, but also because some content is repeated and redistributed through various media platforms in different contexts. From the empirical data gathered, three different types of commemorative Vietnamese state media could be identified that have a meaning for collective remembering through media: historical, entertaining Vietnamese state television as well as public displays.

#### *Historical Vietnamese state television and films*

This type of standardized communication refers to television programming, including TV shows and movies that represent Vietnamese national history or life in a past time period. Typical for this category, respondents referred to documentary movies about officially considered heroes of Vietnam such as "Nguyen Ai Quoc in Hong Kong" (Hop, \*1958, Hanoi, DRV; l. 115), a documentary about Ho Chi Minh. Besides documentary films, there are also novel historical TV series that are also realized in cooperation with other countries as in the VTV1 production on Phan Boi Chau (aired September 2013) used for visual elicitation in the interviews. Anniversaries and commemorative events can serve as a particular occasion for their screenings, but historic motion pictures also have fixed time slots, e.g. from 8 to 9pm on VTV1 according to informants (Ha, \*1978, Hanoi, SRV, l. 236).

Although censorship exists for broadcasting media such as television and films, it cannot be assumed that everything screened is completely free from controversy or on the contrary pure propaganda. Dang Nhat Minh, one of Vietnam's most distinguished and also internationally renowned director and his films are examples for the nuances between official narratives and social criticism. In the Vietnamese film industry, he is regarded as "a legitimate voice of the country" (Duong 2012, 91) with a sound family background, being the son of an officially considered martyr. The granted legitimacy and popularity provided the director with more flexibility and freedom to act in a restrictive environment for the arts. Yet, some of his films have also caused controversy domestically (ibid., 105; Cohen 2001) and academically. While Bradley (2001, 201-207) e.g. considers one of his earlier

films *Bao Gio cho den Thang Muoi* ("When the Tenth Month Comes", 1984) a revisionist movie, Ly (2016) reads it as predominantly promoting communist ideology. This example shows that at least some of his films can be read along ideological lines but also subversively.

Politically and historically probably his most sensitive movie *Mua Oi* ("The House of Guava", also "The Season of Guavas", 1999) deviated from the party line and criticized the land reform of the 1950s in Vietnam. It was screened in Vietnam but was not officially available for sale on DVD (personal conversation with host family, March 2015). Generally, Dang's films are not often screened in Vietnam due to lack of interest in the historical material by postwar audiences, little commercial appeal and limited access (Duong 2012, 91/113).

In my own interview data, three informants referred to Dang's works in total. While Nghia (\*1975, Hai Phong, DRV) recommended "When the Tenth Month Comes", two of the elder respondents in my study, Huong (\*1959, Thua-Thien Hue, RVN, l. 172) and Phuong (\*1947, Nam Dinh, DRV, l. 337) counted one of his later movies "Don't burn" (*Dung Dot*, 2009) to their repertoire. All three informants have a revolutionary family background. The two elder women in particular aligned their own descriptions of the movie with official narratives of heroism and national sacrifice. The movie tells the story about war heroine Dang Thuy Tram. A US-soldier found her diary and returned it to her family after her death by military force in 1970 (cinematheque 2016). With 687,500 USD, the state invested heavily into the film project that was based on an already best-selling memoir (average investment 60,000 USD) (Duong 2012, 113). Huong and Phuong's statements indicate that their readings of the movie are not only harmonized with publicly dominating views of the past, but also their own families' histories. The generally meagre representation of Dang's movies in informants' MCRs despite his international fame supports Duong's (2012) observation of little domestic popularity and interest in coping with national trauma in viewing his films.

The disinterest in 'high' art films in Viet Nam indicate a profound lack of concern on the part of filmgoers about issues of collective mourning, loss and recovering the national past, themes that make up the country's most celebrated films. (Duong 2012, 113)

Other historical movies and series that occurred more often across MCRs included *Canh dong hoang* ("Wild Field", Hong Sen Nguyen, 1979), *Van bai lat ngua* ("Cards on the table", Le Hoang Hoa, 1982-1987) and *Biet dong Sài Gòn* ("The Children of Saigon's Special Task Force", Long Van, 1986). The emphasis on the mnemonic value of certain historical movies is strengthened by regular reruns on state television, particularly on holidays or

anniversaries related to historical events. Commemorative or anniversary news (Sanko 2016b) played only a minor role in respondents' MCRs.

#### *Vietnamese entertainment television*

Informants' accounts further reveal that besides obvious historical content such as historical documentaries, films or series, several entertainment television shows carried historic and commemorative meaning for the viewers. Shows discussed in the interviews were e.g. quiz shows that included historical questions, the annual review show, the music and entertainment show *Giai Dieu Tu Hao* ("Proud Melodies", VTV3) and a show on family reunions after war times (probably *Nhu chua be co cuoc chia ly*, "Like there has never been separation", VTV9, 2007-today). The latter two focus thematically on times of the revolution, the Second Indochina War and legacies of wartimes. Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) commented on his viewing experience of the reunion show as follows:

*[...] one program, something I spend time for [...] you mention the young people, in the past, I think the [...], they reunited, because the people they are missing, they are missing someone, maybe in long time, in the war that they are missing someone. The program they try to look for the / and people can reunite the family, I like it, it remind in the past, keep the some history in memory and I like, actually I spend every weekend, [...]* (Duy, l. 135)

Instead of hard historical facts, the show Duy favours in his account deals with people's emotions of loss and love for a person. In this affective approach of the entertainment show he also sees an alternate way of engaging young people with the history of the country.

Although the mass exodus of Vietnamese after the unification of the country is usually not a topic of official historiography (Marr 2000, 17), the entertainment sector is characterized by strong transnational ties. Some entertainment shows star members of the Vietnamese diaspora, particularly in music shows (Valverde 2003). One of the respondents noted that the depiction of so-called *Viet Kieu* ("Vietnamese overseas") has changed over time in Vietnamese state television (Van, l. 91-92). While neglecting to address historical reasons of the Vietnamese diaspora's existence in the first place, the focus in the representation in nowadays television seems to be on the openness of the country and welcoming back of "Vietnamese overseas". This impression also goes in line with a press strategy that is supposed to stress the aspects of unification and a more neutral narrative and vocabulary to former affiliates of the regime in the RVN (Großheim 2016, 27; Sanko 2016b).

Entertaining television programs also included annual reviews that refer to the very recent past (the last year). The most popular end-of-the-year show is *Gap nhau cuoi nam* ("Meeting each other at year's end"), commonly known as *Tao Quan* (2003-present) and broadcasted

on VTV3 on New Year's Eve of the lunar calendar. Interviewees described the show as very popular and humorous (Hien, l. 73-75; Hop, l. 129; Phu, l. 452-454). The comedy show touches upon controversial issues in Vietnam's politics, economy and society such as corruption. Respondents themselves did not refer explicitly to its satirical character, but scholars argued that *Tao Quan* does not only entertain, but also "critically [reflects] on the life of the nation." (McAllister/Luckman 2015, 110). Although attempts of censoring the show have been publicly discussed, it was not hindered in airing its satirical content (ibid., 124). For respondents, *Tao Quan* is therefore likely to serve not only for reviewing the events of the recent past, but also assess the present state of their lives. The fact that informants did not explicitly refer to the concealed criticism in the show might hint at the sensitivity of issues rather not to be discussed with a stranger in an interview. The subversive nature and entailed popularity of such end-of-the-year shows has also been observed in socialist TV of other countries (Bardan 2017). It is therefore worthwhile to assess entertainment media formats as ways of engaging with collective pasts, particularly in authoritarian settings.

#### *Commemorative public displays*

Commemorative banners, billboards and socialist wall posters prominently feature public spaces or line the streets of Vietnamese urban areas. The prominence of such displays easily evokes the impression of a publicly excessive occupation with the past, a phenomenon Tai (2001b, 8) called "hypermnesia". Given their public prevalence, it was rather surprising that commemorative banners and billboards rarely represented a conscious part in respondents' MCRs. Luan (\*1976, Lao Cai, SRV) generally described them as visual reminders for up-coming anniversaries.

*Accidentally, maybe when we travel on the roads, we can see the big screen at the corner of the road. They show the highlights, we celebrating the establishment of 85<sup>th</sup> year of Party of Vietnam or something like that. I can say at that time when we had a lot of information around and with different methods can memorize to the events in the past. (Luan, l. 68)*

Luan emphasized the coincidental nature of noticing the billboards when driving by in traffic. The huge volume of traffic, the quick notice and strong visual presence of these usually commemorative displays on everyday ways to work, school or grocery shopping might be some explanations for the little conscious attention Vietnamese informants pay to them. Moreover, the presence of these usually state-propagandistic reminders of historical anniversaries becomes overshadowed by a plethora of commercial and advertising billboards, plastering entire terrace fronts and addressing potential urban middle class consumers. The interview data suggests that the state's efforts to inform and engage the

population in the commemoration of a revolutionary pasts and thus in controlling urban public spaces (Drummond 2000, 2384-2385) are sidelined by commercial and new leisure interests of an urban consumer culture that evolved in society since *Doi Moi* (Thomas 2002, 1614; Earl 2014).

#### **6.1.2.2 Historical books and other literary forms**

Vietnamese respondents regularly mentioned books as their primary sources for learning about the past, particularly standardized textbooks from school. As prior research on historiography and history education in Vietnam shows (see 4.2.1), content within textbooks is selective and follows official narratives according to the party line (e.g. Großheim 2018). While the majority of informants was educated within a socialist system, we need to note that they received their school education at different time periods. A few of the eldest respondents even studied within two different educational systems and states. School systems, education and teaching materials differed greatly in the DRV and RVN (Dror 2018). When respondents refer to their school textbooks as historical source we therefore can assume that the knowledge of those elder informants educated and socialized during colonial times or in the RVN diverges from those who went to school in the DRV or SRV. During colonial times, teaching materials and curricula, particularly in the French colony Cochinchina relied on the French model. Hung (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) recalled his school education in the interview.

*You know, I learned French at school. everything, when I was young, including science and maths and French. Vietnamese used to be my foreign language (giggle). The country at that time was under the French. (Hung, l. 152)*

Hung's account illustrates how French colonial education alienated Vietnamese students from their heritage (Dror 2018, 60; *ibid.* 2017, 127). After French rule and in the early years of the RVN, several Vietnamese history textbooks from the colonial era were still in use (*ibid.* 2018, 100). The data, however, does not contain much further insight on history education in the RVN and mostly refers to more recent history education in the SRV. Nhien (\*1980, Nghe An, SRV) e.g. noted "I have so many lessons in the book about Uncle Ho." (l. 189)

Apart from history textbooks in school, a few informants were generally eager readers and consulted other literary sources about Vietnam's past, including memoirs, novels and other historical books (Binh; Tuan; Giang; Hung; Phu). Giang (\*1952, Tien Giang, SVN) e.g. recommended Nguyen Khai's novel about the revolution, whose family background is "two-sided" (Giang, l. 75). Giang whose family background is also "two-sided" ultimately

presented a larger literary repertoire, including Vietnamese books published abroad due to censorship. Although it is hard to estimate the proportions of factual and fictional content in such novels and memoirs, some respondents do rely on them as an additional historical source. Novels and memoirs have been popular literary genres in Vietnam used for propagandistic reasons (Zinoman 2001), but also for subversive criticism or alternate views on collective pasts as e.g. in Bao Ninh's "The sorrows of war" (Margara 2012, 107-109).

Historical books in informants' MCRs, however, did not exclusively refer to 20th century history of Vietnam. Tuan (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) e.g. was also interested in the earlier Trinh and Ho Dynasties (Tuan, l. 195-199). Another respondent, Phu (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) particularly looked for old books "for the official [...] history" (Phu, l. 75). A peculiarity and challenge of proving historical sources in Vietnam is that pre-colonial historical documents were written in Chinese characters before French missionaries and later French colonial authorities introduced *quoc ngu* a Latin-based script of Vietnamese in the 19th century (Dror 2018, 60). Going back to verify original precolonial sources is therefore impossible without knowing Chinese.

Other literary forms that played a role in the empirical data were poetry and proverbs. Interview talk about proverbs was usually initiated by a proverb (*uong nuoc nho nguon* ; "remember the spring of the water you drink from"). The proverb was used as stimulant in the guidelines to trigger responses on the meaning of the past. As often the case with phrases, proverbs and folktales, their origins remain unknown. It is noteworthy, however, that in discussing them, we can again observe the transgression of boundaries of the familial, the political and societal. Informants usually referred to the family, society or the nation in the same vein.

*So, many! "uong nuoc nho nguon" is one of them. There are also many other proverbs like "without a teacher you can't become anyone" or like a quotation from uncle Ho "nothing is more valuable than freedom". Above all, a proverb that is passed on from generation to generation, about support between people: The good leaves protect the worn-out leaves. I find this very human. It tells people to live together in a humane way. Maybe if you have a good life, you can help people who have a difficult life. (Hang, l. 160)*

Hang's (\*1959, Hanoi, DRV) quote illustrates her familiarity with proverbs that are kept at least in oral tradition over generations. These literary forms are not treated as knowledge about the past, but moral doctrines of a collective past still valid today. A view across the cases reveals the plentitude of such proverbs in Vietnamese society and cultural tradition. Such proverbs represent another example of mnemonic forms that do not simply fit one category in the Assmanns' (1994; J. Assmann 2008) classic distinction of cultural and communicative memory. People pass them on in mundane familial contexts

(communicative memory) and so do public institutions such as schools or the CPV (cultural memory). They function as moral messages and guidelines to navigate social relations and aspirations of individuals and society as a whole. The empirical data showed that often these proverbs leave room for interpretation. For this reason, people assign varying meanings to such sayings. While some might refer to familial relations, others might inscribe an ideological message based on the country's national past.

### 6.1.2.3 Folk and popular music

Music turned out to be a crucial component in respondents' MCRs. Music is naturally crossmedia, taking several different media-specific forms to be played and listened to. Its representation across cases in this study supports prior memory research that found recorded music to be one the most important "technologies of remembering" in people's everyday lives (Pickering/Keightley 2013, 105; *ibid.* 2015). Previous media socialization research similarly pointed out music's power to evoke previously embedded emotions and experiences and relive them on instances of relistening (Hartung 2010, 99). The interview data mirrors these particular features of music as respondents reflected predominantly on its emotional characteristics, the lyrics of the songs, the place of origin and personal experiences connected to it.

*Because it ask me to remember the past, how the people wear, what clothes these people wear, how they work, because the way they perform will imitate the action, activity that farmer's doing and, yeah, it remind me of the past. Of the own childhood and our country history. (Phuc, l. 260-262)*

*During my uni time, I like to listen to the folk music, the "cai luong" from south Vietnam. I like it very much, sometime I can watch a TV program of one, yeah, they have also, not all of the show but only one section of the song. I like it. (Duong, l. 72)*

In both examples from the interview data, respondents link the folk music to particular life stages. From a socialization perspective that underscores music's function as temporal anchor in individuals' own life stories (Hartung 2010, 99). At the same time, temporal and spatial references address national and regional history that conflate with personal past experiences, representing different layers of identity. Particularly for folk music, the place of the music's origin and the identification with that particular region, i.e. through ancestors, is significant because of the strong affective connection to ancestral land and regional specificity.

*And with "Dan ca quan ho Bac Ninh" - that means the songs in Bac Ninh are very good. And then again in Phu Tho province, there are traditional songs in Phu Tho - the home of my father also recognized; and "Vi Dam" is new but I think very good. (Hop, l. 103)*

Besides folk music, so-called "red" (*nhac do* or *nhach cach mang*) and "yellow music" (*nhac vang*) represent music genres of mnemonic value among interviewees. Both genres are tightly entangled with Vietnam's national histories. "Red music" is revolutionary music and comprises songs that "venerate the revolution, war and victory of Vietnam's past." (Olson 2008, 266) Vo Van Kiet, a CPV leader, said about red music in the early 1980s, "It is in the fire of battle that songs are written which we may all recognize as the songs of our hearts[...]" (Vo 1981, 147 as cited in Taylor 2001, 40).

"Yellow music" on the other hand colloquially describes sentimental pre-1975 music of southern Vietnam (Taylor 2001, 39). Officially banned until the 1980s by the communist government (*ibid.*), it regained popularity in post-reform Vietnam and is at the heart of Vietnam's transnational music industry (Valverde 2003). Vietnamese diasporic communities in France and particularly in southern California had established prominent music houses (*Thuy Nga*, ASIA Productions) that preserved, performed and reproduced pre-1975 Vietnamese music that themed love, patriotism, the lost nation and the homeland (*ibid.*, 31-32; Cunningham/Nguyen 1999, 82-83). *Viet Kieu* music became popular on Vietnam's black market in the 1980s and was openly listened to and watched again in the 1990s (Valverde 2003, 34-35). By the early 2000s, Vietnamese diasporic singers started to return and perform in Vietnam for greater audiences (*ibid.*, 36).

One respondent, Oanh (\*1954, SVN) said she liked listening to Huong Lan (l. 91). What she did not reveal in the interview, however, is that Huong Lan is one of the key figures of *Thuy Nga* and prominent diasporic singer of *nhac vang* and *cai luong* (traditional opera music) who had left Vietnam at an early age for France and later the US. Carruthers (2001, 144-145) sees Huong Lan exemplary of border-crossing artists and music that allows for "trans-spatial and trans-temporal imaginaries" (Yang 1997, 288 as cited in Carruthers 2001, 145). This anthropological notion comes close to Pickering and Keightley's (2015, 70) description of music as "time-travel tropes". As daughter of a soldier formerly based in Saigon and wife of a GDR-educated scholar who attended the interview, Oanh's (\*1954, SVN) preference for that music is likely to create such "trans-spatial and trans-temporal imaginaries" for her to engage with memories of pre-1975 Saigon—technically something she cannot share directly as common experience with her husband who was socialized in a socialist system and whom she met only after unification. The fact that she did not reveal much about her former life in the RVN in the presence of her husband, her former student, a local interpreter and me, further hints at the norms of what can and cannot be said about the past in less intimate settings. In this regard, music can also function as a

space for more intimate memories that otherwise have no place in Vietnam's conventional public memory. Kim (\*1978, Nghe An, SRV) who grew up in a revolutionary family recalled her encounter with *nhac vang* as a new discovery of Southern culture that had been kept from her during her childhood as something inappropriate.

*And I discover the song, the music that came from the South that I did not. I hear when I was little, but they said „the yellow music is not good“ something like that. The people who listen this, but it is a [!: forbidden?] forbidden by government, yes. (Kim, l. 25)*

For younger informants, who grew up with the new liberties of urban Vietnam's emerging consumer class after *Doi Moi*, the former political sensitivity and stigmatization of that yellow music seems vanished as it is often mentioned in the same breath as red music (e.g. Binh, l. 156; Nhung, l. 103).

*Yes, when I was a kid especially the time I don't really have my own kind of music, so I often listen to my parents' kind of music. It's almost about that music like yellow or red music. Actually at that time I even could sing that song too that kind of songs too and really enjoy it. And often when my parents listen to that song, they told me stories about that time. This song was about the time that Vietnam has wars. And at that time, daddy has to (...) hide from bomb or the planes. And mommy has to learn without lights or something like this. So I, I was really touching. And even now I am really touching when listening to their stories. And I feel like I can experience it and I can (...) know more about their time although I didn't, I wasn't there. (Nhung, l. 103)*

Nhung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) explained that she had preferences for both, *nhac do* and *nhac vang* inspired by her parents' music taste. While both, Kim and Nhung's accounts illustrate the significance of socialization agents in developing media preferences, Nhung's description demonstrates the "prosthetic" (Landsberg 2004) or "postmemory" (Hirsch 2012) features of music. While many memory scholars have ascribed this mnemonic imaginary of not lived family histories mainly to (audio)-visual media (ibid.; Landsberg 2004; Welzer et al. 2002), music and sounds are still a marginalized field in media and memory studies. Pickering and Keightley (2013, 105) argued that mass-mediated music represents "cultural objects of personal and interpersonal remembering that often have a deep affective resonance in people's lives." Besides music's transtemporal and -spatial power (Carruthers 2001; Pickering/Keightley 2015), Nhung's example clearly illustrated that this power is clearly nurtured by the common reception setting with parents and invoked emotions while listening. In this regard, mass-mediated music framed by familial narrative and affect crafts the music's mnemonic power in a process of socialization.

#### **6.1.2.4 Exhibitions and media at memorial grounds**

Respondents' MCRs also include museum visits in school, professional or familial contexts. Pictures, information boards and theatre-like scenery are the key media that guide through exhibitions; video or interactive elements are less common. Respondents, however, usually

did not differentiate or single out specific media and referred to museums and exhibitions in more general terms. Generally, media at exhibitions and memorial grounds are less prominent elements of MCRs compared to television and films. The visit of public historical museums is further encouraged by the state through free admission for Vietnamese citizens, e.g. at the HCM museum or class trips to exhibitions as part of school education. The interview data suggests that museum or exhibition visits are usually less motivated by own historical interest and are more rarely on the agenda of familial leisure time activities than visits to actual historical sights or memorial grounds such as Cu Chi, the village near HCMC famous for its revolutionary resistance and underground tunnel system. The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum at Ba Dinh Square, where today Ho's body is kept and prominently staged for visitors, is often featured as familiar place in interviews due to visual elicitation. Tai (1995, 273-275), who showed that the Mausoleum embodies the heroic personality cult surrounding Ho Chi Minh, argued that this belief is not only orchestrated but also integral part of people's everyday lives, particularly in northern Vietnam. The interview data indicates that is also the case because closely located schools contributed as socialization agents in forging positive childhood memories surrounding the place and cult through regular visits or by awarding trips to the Mausoleum for outstanding performances of students.

*Yes. When I was very small, I achieved the best score in class and I was sent to this place. Yes. It means I very famous in my school and I was sent here. I was so proud of myself. OK, I achieved very good score. I was allowed to visit HCM's place. Even though, when I have children, sometimes I came back to Hanoi with them, I always took them to be here. (Hien, I. 97)*

*Sure. So many time I come there, because before, I was student and every year and the school holding and every, all the student come there, go around. And I'm from Hai Phong - to Hanoi one hundred kilometer and then come here and then come back. [...]Here and not for play you know, only go around to see how do father in the people, how to see directly. (Nghia, I. 132-136)*

Hien's (\*1971, Hanoi, DRV) example shows that her childhood memories are less concerned with the historical information about place and figure when she saw the mausoleum's picture in the interview, but the feelings of pride of her personal successes. Rewarding such personal achievements or making school trips a regular practice illustrates how personal childhood experiences and later memories become enmeshed with commemorative practices and narratives of national heroism. It is transgressing spheres as these that complicate a differentiation of public and private in the everyday not only in terms of media appropriation but also regarding collective remembering within a state regime that partially based its memory politics on cultural everyday practices (Tai 1995, 278; Tréglodé 2012, 11; Kwon 2006). Nghia (\*1975, Hai Phong, DRV) also still spoke about Ho

as "father" and "uncle" (l. 130), a vocabulary that is characteristic for his personality cult and suggests intimate familial relations with the former political leader (Tai 1995, 274). The transgression of everyday cultural practices and engaging with collective pasts in Vietnam, however, is not always state-led and not only visible in the personality cult of Ho Chi Minh but also regarding other nationally considered heroes and heroines. Giebel (2001, 77; 2004) e.g. found that the commemoration of revolutionary and second president of the DRV, Ton Duc Thang, in his home province An Giang gained religious character since the 1980s. The historian argued in this case that Ton's "museum-shrine" represents a space that does not only serve didactic purposes in an ideological sense but rather a ritual place of hero and guardian spirit worship that draws from ethical Confucian and traditional political-cultural concepts of good governance, humanity, duty, authority and order (Giebel 2001, 86-95). The interview data also provided evidence on such semi-religious, commemorative practices of historic figures. Lanh (\*1955, Nghe An, DRV) e.g. described her touristic visit to the island of Con Dao, witnessing the spiritual rites in honor of the considered martyr Vo Thi Sau.

*there are also about some, how do you say, the hero - the heroes of Vietnam in the past, for example Vo Thi Sau, a girl who ? killed. Yes I visit a few years ago in ?, we also know the grave of her and many people ? always for (...) the ? in the south. That is so, we don't have to come during the day but [...] I don't know, ? then was, how do you say, so holy yes, come in the evening not during the day. You know cemetery, that's cold but when we come, it's very warm. Very much warmth, not cold like, at the cemetery you always feel so cold [oh so] but, but in this cemetery, to her grave, to Vo Thi Sau, there we always find the warmth and they say evening is more holy, you should come in the evening, ten or eleven o'clock in the evening and so many people come there [?] ? we visit her grave (Lanh, l. 23)*

Lanh's account illustrates the spiritual characteristics that are assigned to national martyrs for those who at least in part agree with the revolutionary idea of the hero (Tréglodé 2012). Her interest in the commemoration and worshipping ceremony, however, is not only one of a believer but also one of a visiting guest. Her description evokes the impression that memorial grounds as these have also become a touristic commodity, particularly for a middle and upper class that can afford such travels. Informative media, pictures, signs or conversations at such commemorative place are rarely a conscious part in informants' retrospective reports on such visits. The visits are usually incorporated into broader familial and national narratives of history that usually already exist prior to the visit. The multifunctionality of such memorial grounds as historical, spiritual, political and touristic makes their meaning for engaging with collective pasts so versatile and widely applicable. From own observations in the field (spring 2015), some history museums or exhibitions in Hanoi were scarcely visited by the local population with the exceptions of the Ho Chi Minh Museum, Mausoleum, Garden House and the Army museum. It was also obvious

that the information provided in the museums was also quite repetitive. In the B52 Museum located at Doi Can Street in Hanoi, I was the only visitor besides the staff and a family who used the outdoor exhibition space for sports exercises and to have their children play in an otherwise densely populated urban area where open space has become a rare commodity. Other informants similarly reported how they used Ba Dinh Square in front of the HCM Mausoleum as playground or meeting spot with friends (Binh, l. 123; Quynh, l. 73; Trung, l. 204) The family provided an example of how memorial grounds are also claimed by urbanites for other than state-intended commemorative purposes. It shows again that the strong visibility and dominance of state-encouraged memory politics can only unfold its power if it also meets the present needs of the population.

#### 6.1.2.5 *Inter- and transnational historical media*

Satellite, cable and digital media technologies technically allow respondents to access inter- and transnational media content produced outside of Vietnam if not blocked by the authorities. During my first stay in Vietnam in 2012, Facebook for example was occasionally blocked but could easily be accessed still by using a VPN connection. While I discussed *Viet Kieu* music already as a separate transnational phenomenon earlier, this last subsection concentrates on foreign and diasporic historic media productions including historical fiction, documentaries, memoirs and history books. Among the younger generation, Chinese historical film productions from Mainland China, Hong Kong or Taiwan were preferred over Vietnamese productions (e.g. Nhung, Hoa, Hai). Chinese productions usually included historical fiction series and television costume dramas such as "The Empress of China" (2014-2015) (Nhung, l. 54), *Hoan Chau cong chua* ("My Fair Princess", 1998-1999) or *Tay Du Ky* ("Journey to West", 1986) (Hoa, l. 45; Huong, l. 90; Phuc, l. 134; Linh, l. 117). Particularly, for the genre of historical documentaries and historical information, a few respondents relied on Western productions such as "Last Days in Vietnam" (Rory Kennedy, 2014) (Dan, l. 75) or generally the BBC (Hoa, l. 86).

In a lot of cases where respondents refer to inter- or transnational sources of historical content, they compare it to and regard it as alternate sources to Vietnamese content. A few informants for example explicitly mentioned Vietnamese diasporic literature published abroad as a source they would actually search for and consult to gain alternate perspectives on collective pasts in Vietnam.

*Some books related to true historical events although this is not typical history book but this is a kind of memory book. You heard about this? By a journalist Tran Dinh. They are journalists working for governmental newspaper for many years. They got a lot of information and evidences and now they publish the book with the support of Amazon for foreigner publish houses. (Giang, l. 75)*

*Of course, the further, the unofficial analyses, you cannot find in the book printed here, but you can find the book printed in "USA" or in "France". For a summer I go to the "USA" in the area where many many "Vietnamese" living here, they print a lot of books. And this book is quite different here. Or some writer here, they cannot publish, the wars, they have to move in the abroad to print. And some books also printed here, but when after publish, the government take, because they read "Ah it's not good". And also some books release in the black market, they print and you can buy. In Hanoi you can buy many many unofficial books. (Phu, l. 234)*

It is noteworthy that in both examples, respondents' family backgrounds are split along geographical and/or ideological lines. Both informants themselves had a great personal and professional transnational network that nurtures their interest and eases their access to alternate sources of Vietnamese history. Similarly to previously banned *Viet Kieu* music records and videos (Valverde 2003, 34), Phu's (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) statement attests the continuous relevance of the black market in getting hold of censored media products despite commonly available Internet access in the urban areas. In the interview data, the Internet as a source for historical information is usually referred to in quite vague terms. While Google as an online search tool represented an important component in informants' MCRs, the actual website and provider of the content often remains unspecified in the accounts of informants. Google therefore usually served as a general reference for looking up historical resources.

### 6.1.3 Communicating memories in mediated interpersonal communication

While the previous subchapter discussed forms of communicating memories face-to-face and through mass media, the following subchapter sets the focus on mnemonic forms of mediated interpersonal communication. The empirical data in this regard contains forms of media communication that lay across but also family, peer and mnemonic group communication discussed previously. In contrast to previous forms discussed, forms of mediated interpersonal communication require access to particular media technologies and usually refer to personal or amateur uses of such technologies that enable them to create own (mnemonic) media content. In this sense, the forms to be discussed here are subsumed under the term "personal cultural memory" – „acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place.“ (van Dijck 2007, 6) Such forms of mediated interpersonal communication in the interview data include first and foremost personal photography and transnational communication. Compared to face-to-face and mass-mediated types, the scope and frequency of mediated interpersonal forms as ways of engaging with collective pasts were more limited. Forms of

mediated interpersonal communication are thus the least common components of respondents' MCRs.

### 6.1.3.1 *Personal photography*

Besides recorded music, Pickering and Keightley (2013, 2015) identified personal photography as the other most important "technology of remembering" in the everyday lives of people in Western societies. In the context of family conversations, I have already noted, however, that cameras have not been common devices in a lot of respondents' households before *Doi Moi* (e.g. Duy, l. 139). Post-war scarcity in Vietnam partially explains why personal photography as historical record or "evidence" (Kuhn 2000, 186) is not a key element in informants' MCRs.

While I already touched upon their relevance as visual cues during familial conversations, the interview data also includes insights on people's own perceptions and everyday uses of photography apart from talks. These everyday uses still refer predominantly to family photographs at respondents' homes. Informants' statements usually referred to visible photographs that decorated the walls at home, photographs on family altars for ancestor worship or photo albums. Particularly for more recent events, digital photography was regarded a means of holding on to and keeping record of positive or outstanding experiences during e.g. holidays, touristic journeys or family events. The appropriation and creation of personal photography in this sense has a double-meaning: (1) imagining times not lived or not remembered; (2) recording experiences for future memory. The second aspect foregrounds the prospective dimension of collective remembering. Both dimensions of remembering through personal photography mirror social and cultural conventions at the time of the image's creation (van Dijck 2007, 100; Kuhn 2002, 73).

When for example Phong (\*1990, Dong Nai, SRV) stated that his father has a photograph of him and Vo Nguyen Giap hanging in the living room, then it does not only tell Phong about his veteran father's wartime experience but also that he identified himself with the cause of the Vietnamese revolution. The fact that the picture is prominently displayed in the living room, where also guests are received, still signals pride in standing in for revolutionary ideals past and present. In this case, the photograph is not only supposed to personally keep a moment in time but the display is also meant to share this past experience with family members and visitors. In this sense, personal photographs are always addressed towards more or less private conversational communities (Keppler 2001, 150). The example of the photograph of Phong's father also illustrates once more how

intertwined the state's and familial commemorative practices can be even in people's private homes.

Creating, taking and viewing images does, however, not always necessarily touch upon events of national history such as wartimes. Photographing, especially after *Doi Moi* and in the course of the recent tremendous increase in smartphone use, has become an integral part as ritual practice on special occasions such as holidays or annual festivities. This focus on photographing positively charged family events and rites of passage actually appears to be a commonality with home-mode media in Western contexts (Chalfen 1987; Pickering/Keightley 2013, 99).

*I think in Nguyen Hue Street, the one you saw the statue. But these days it changed to Ham Nghi you know. And I attended it with my son and my friends and there was a flower road and book road. And I was with my son the first day of the lunar new year. I would like to call it Lunar New Year, not Chinese New Year, you know (kichern) and he bought a book and we taken photo and like that. (Kim, l. 129)*

*To share with people the moment and that we are experiencing, that we experience, (?) I did. When I visit the new places I'll take photo and post them on YouTube. After exercising I'll take photo of myself and post them on YouTube. [...] No, on Facebook. (Phuc, l. 100-102)*

Besides family activities on prominent holidays such as Lunar New Year (*Tết*), touristic trips to other cities, historic or spiritual sites or simply the "quiet" (Phuc, l. 110) countryside are popular motifs of personal analogue and digital photography. As Phuc's example shows photographing often coincides with social media practices to be discussed in the next subchapter. While in Western contexts amateur photography is often discussed in line with home video (Chalfen 1987; van Dijck 2007; Pickering/Keightley 2013), early home video technologies did not play a role in the media biographies of middle-class Vietnamese informants. Video technologies were simply not available or affordable for many Vietnamese before economic reforms. Analogue home-mode videos therefore did not represent a component in informants' MCRs, not even for the youngest respondents. The lack of this practice might also explain why digital home video did not occur at all in the interview data.

### **6.1.3.2 Transnational and social media communication**

Engaging with collective pasts among urban Vietnamese also transgresses national boundaries. The socio-political history and circumstances of Vietnam have encouraged emigration in the past, resulting in an approximantely 4.5 million strong Vietnamese diaspora spread across 103 countries around the globe (Le/Nguyen 2015, 26). The largest Vietnamese diasporic communities exist in the United States, particularly California, Australia, Canada and France (MPI 2012, 6). The fact that the sampling strategy in this

study particularly attracted informants that lived some time abroad for educational and professional training further increases the significance of transnational communication in many respondents' media repertoires. In addition, members of the urban middle class often encourage their children to study abroad, particularly if they themselves did so (DAAD 2015). Collective remembering across national boundaries therefore largely affects familial, peer and professional transnational networks of urban Vietnamese. Digitization in Vietnam has technically, timely and financially eased the nurturing of such networks across distances.

In most cases, mediated interpersonal communication about the past takes place via e-mail, Facebook and video call apps such as Skype, Viber or Zalo. These technologies and ways of communication allow for mediated conversations about the past, the exchange of media content about the past such as images or e-books and the realization of traditional social rituals across territorial distances.

Oanh (\*1954, SVN) for example talked about how video calls with her son in Germany became an integral part of celebrating *Tet* together and thus realize traditional familial rituals. In another case, transnational e-mail communication was central for Kim (\*1978, Nghe An, SRV) in exchanging critical books and memoirs about life under communism that are censored in Vietnam. Her contacts in the French-Vietnamese diaspora provided her with regular information and pdf-files of new diasporic publications about the past.

*[...] one month before, my friend in France who sent me a pdf-copy of Bui Ngoc Tan. Bui Ngoc Tan, he was a writer who was in prison and in the prison he wrote a book about the story of the year 2000. Because when he was in prison it was in 90s something like that and he thinks about the future about the. And after he wrote this, it was not published legally in Vietnam (Kim, l. 33)*

In Kim's example mediated interpersonal communication provides the ground for engaging with collective pasts that are not part of official public memory in Vietnam. While these e-mail exchanges are about literary and thus mass-mediated forms of collective memory (see 6.1.2), other mediated conversations were directly concerned with direct past experiences such as witness accounts of refugee and migration experiences. Phu (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) e.g. recalled that in the early days of the Internet in Vietnam, he randomly received e-mails of *Viet Kieu* he did not know. They shared their critical views about the communist government in Vietnam.

*At that time because my sister she study in Soviet Union and then we have to (?) Internet connection to connect to my sister. It's very impressive to me, a little bit change my thinking about the Government or something because when I get the Internet many stranger email from somewhere. Someone send to me they say about problem of the society or something and that is very good article cannot see in the paper, the newspaper. (Phu, l. 140)*

Phu's report shows that Vietnamese overseas have also used mediated interpersonal communication strategically to question the positive light on the CPV. We might consider these e-mail campaigns as acts of diasporic memory politics. The spread of newsletters about commemorative events or initiatives that negotiate dominant narratives of Vietnam's history are still common among Vietnamese refugees. Mediated conversations about collective pasts, however, are not always of political nature. They can also be integrated into family conversations as in Nga's (\*1994, Hanoi, SRV) case, who reported that she sometimes speaks with her relatives in Slovakia about their wartime experiences (l. 289).

Transnational communication is often realized through social media communication. While social media communication is certainly always translocal, it is not always transnational, however. The most used social networking site (SNS) in Vietnam is Facebook. The interview data does underscore this preference, as Facebook is the only SNS that occurred as component in respondents' MCRs. Facebook activities are particularly relevant for participating in mnemonic online communities and sharing memories within peer and familial networks across distances. Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) for example considered Facebook the only appropriate means to keep his daughter in the US connected to their family's history.

*But I share in the Facebook, is my story with my mother, this story with my father, I almost have 100 stories for my daughter in Facebook, just only mention about my mother, my grandfather something like that, but they very interesting to involve, to share the feeling, that mean I keep in touch them with in the past. (Duy, l. 210)*

Writing Facebook stories about elder or deceased family members is a parental responsibility in Duy's view. To make sure the family stories catch the attention of his daughter who studies abroad, he usually tags her profile name on Facebook.

So far, I have discussed several forms of communicating memories face-to-face, through mass-media and personalized uses of media technologies. All of these forms were based on and abstracted from analyzed components of informants' MCRs. These MCR components or forms of communicating memories stand for different ways of engaging with collective pasts in everyday urban Vietnam. We have seen that face-to-face and mass-mediated forms represent the most relevant and most diversified encounters with the past in respondents' lifeworlds, notably in familial, peer, educational and professional contexts. The findings further indicate that the constellation of these MCR components largely depends on the (previous) availability of certain media technologies, thematic preferences and ideological attitudes that evolved in throughout respondents' socializations.

In a next step of analyzing and presenting findings, the focus will shift from the actual ways of engagement to types of meaning-making as these forms of communicating memories are brought into practice.

## 6.2 Types of mnemonic communication practices

As explained in the theory chapter of this dissertation (see 2.1), communicating memories in the context of this study is understood as sets of social and communicative practices (PRE1-2) that create meaning when applied in relation to others as interaction (Weber 1966; Krotz 2001, 59). These interactions can but do not necessarily have to involve media technologies.

The following chapter presents which types of mnemonic communication practices (MCPs) play a role in the everyday lives of Vietnamese urbanites (RQ1.1) and how they make subjective sense of these actions (RQ1.3). They are described by means of a **three-fold typology of practices**: (1) practices of acquirement, (2) practices of negotiation and (3) practices of contestation. While these three main types strongly coincide with Hall's ([1982] 2005) and Ryan's (2010) classifications of media and memories appropriation respectively, they are differentiated more specifically in various subtypes here. Practices of acquirement encompass various communicative actions through which respondents have encountered, accepted and internalized communicated content of and about the past. Practices of negotiation include communicative acts that compare various versions of communicated content or narratives about collective pasts. Finally, practices of contestation address subversive practices that stand against hegemonic content and narratives of collective memory in Vietnam. The three main MCPs thus ultimately address questions of power in engaging with collective pasts. Further, each minor practice is driven by certain motivations and conditioned by particular social norms of action (RQ1.2) that create subjective sense and which are included in the following review of empirical findings.

The three main types and subtypes of MCPs represent idealized types (Weber 1966, 18) abstracted from interview data that can, however, overlap in natural social contexts. They also cut across the previously discussed forms of communicating memories (see 6.1). The typology at its most abstract level can be applied in and to different cultural contexts and thus allows for further use and development in other research projects. An overview of the typology of MCPs, their definitions, characteristics and subtypes is provided in the appendix (9.2.1).

### 6.2.1 Practices of acquirement

Practices of acquirement in the interview data subsume those MCPs through which respondents have encountered, accepted and internalized communicated content and narratives about the past. The subchapter explores the motivations and subjectively perceived gratifications behind people's MCPs. The typology distinguishes seven subtypes of practices of acquirement: informing, entertaining, sharing, moral educating, commemorating, creating mnemonic objects and participating in institutionalized memory work.

#### 6.2.1.1 *Informing about Vietnamese and family histories*

Informing includes communicative acts that aim at gaining knowledge about the past. In the context of this study, information or knowledge about the past is defined as content that respondents consider as part of the history of their culture, their country and their own life course. In interviewees' statements, informing practices are expressed by stressing **a new gain, addition or complementation of information about the past** through engagements with media or others. The considered novelty of the communicated content and the prior knowledge of respondents are therefore decisive criteria in determining this practice (Beck 2006, 97). Informing in this regard equals a reflected learning experience for interviewees. Informing practices are empirically one of the most obvious engagements with collective pasts. They also account for the most frequent practices in respondents' MCRs.

Informing practices cut across various forms of communicating memories. Not always do respondents match the appropriated information to a certain form of communication. As typical for propagandistic media strategies, similar content and narratives can be perceived across various media or social contacts. These can include TV documentaries, Facebook posts or family conversations.

What respondents consider informative does not only depend on their prior knowledge, however, but also on the credibility of the social or media contact and the context in which this content about the past is acquired. Only if the source of information is considered credible, the communicated content will be accepted as valuable and become a component in people's MCRs.

Informing practices differ in their degrees of enquiring motivation, interest and involvement in appropriating communicated content about the past. In other words, they can occur more or less voluntarily. While the cognitive needs of curiosity or thirst of

knowledge can be an intrinsic driver for actively turning to specific content (Palmgreen 1983, 18-20; Beck 2010, 194), school education for example often represents learning contexts in which information is not necessarily acquired from intrinsic motivation but externally induced one. We can therefore discern different modes of informing practices from active researching and/or active listening to coincidentally stumbling across or being confronted with novel information during studies. Researching describes a very active and self-intrinsic mode of turning to content concerned with national and family histories and coincides with the enquiring mode of "memory work" (Kuhn 2010, 303). Studying in class denotes a mode of knowledge acquisition that does not always require the full attention or interest of a person.

*Now of course, I know that Vietnam has very great history. I proud about that. The way like the government, they tell other people so boring way, in the bad way. [...] even boring and make me, remind me the terrible time when I was in high school, I learn history [laughing]. (Hai, l. 241)*

In his account, Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) reported that he knows about Vietnamese history, yet did not enjoy the contexts and ways of its appropriation. While history education in school or at the university is not necessarily a voluntary engagement with collective pasts, it remains a key environment and source for many to make sense of their national and familial pasts.

Another example of the learning mode of informing practices often relates to family conversations, particularly to the narrative accounts of elder family members.

*[...] currently I live with my grandfather and sometime my grandfather tell me about the story about the Vietnamese war, the time when he live. He was born in 1932, so he know much about the Vietnamese war, he tell me about the living at that time. [...] I think it very difficult to live, when in 1944, around that, 44, 45, 46, at that time people very hungry and, but the problem is that my grandfather at that time he rich, so it no problem with him, [...]. (Dinh, l. 310-312)*

Dinh (\*1988, HCMC, SRV) who recently moved to Hanoi for professional reasons, started to engage in regular talks with his grandfather during and after dinner. During these conversations, he learned about the living conditions in Vietnam in the course of Japanese occupation and the early establishment of the DRV. In the interview, Dinh did not elaborate on the upper social status of his grandfather at the time. Elitist class backgrounds can be regarded a problematic topic from a communist ideology point of view. Dinh's informing practice also represents an example of "postmemory" (Hirsch 2012) as it crosses generational boundaries. In this intergenerational informing practice, Dinh learned about events and experiences of time periods he did not live through.

Irrespective of whether informing practices take place in the familial, school or in leisure time contexts, age difference between communicators and seniority of one participant

appear to be common characteristics for these practices. Seniority is a highly considered value in Vietnamese society that requires respect from younger members of society towards the elderly, including their knowledge, their life experience and their past. It is therefore not surprising that the communicative counterparts in informing practices are often elderly family members, teachers or other time witnesses. Seniority is a significant credibility factor. As a result, senior participants are more likely to be treated as historic authorities.

In the family context, Hop (\*1958, Hanoi, DRV) described the social value of filial piety (*hieu*) (Jamieson 1995, 16) and the resulting demand for respect and obedience towards the spoken word of the elder.

*[...] the people in Vietnam respect "chu hieu". it is so important. The other people say ok, that is their concern, but you should not criticize back, not so good. But in the West you can criticize directly, not in the opinion. But in Vietnam, if you don't agree, you should just keep quiet. You must not say. Oh my God, you should respect your parents, Chu Hieu very important, most important. Then this is (?) for the solution. You have to respect the other generation, but if you want to live in your own way, you can also live in your own way, you must not criticize other generation. Without them you cannot exist. (Hop, l. 137)*

Informing and learning in this sense goes in line with accepting and respecting what a person of seniority says about the past. Seniority thus creates a communicative norm about informing about the past that largely prevents critical follow-up questions. Questioning the memories of an elder could be considered as doubting his or her credibility and thus showing disrespect. Due to this strong communicative hierarchy stories and narrative accounts about the past as told by elderly members of society are more likely to be accepted.

Informing practices among peers are rare because mnemonic practices within their networks focus more strongly on common experience. In cases of a study abroad stay, however, the updating of a friend about what has happened in one's home country while absent also qualifies as informing practice. Vinh (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) for example learned from his friends about the first performances of Western bands and artists in Vietnam and thus the first outcomes of the end of the country's geopolitical isolation from the West. He himself studied in the just reunified Germany back then and was not able to witness this liberalizing movement in the cultural sphere of his homeland.

Besides individual actors such as family members, teachers and time witnesses, mass media as institutionalized actors are key for informing practices across MCRs. The main media sources used for informing are mass media such as history books, documentary films, textbooks from school or information boards at museums or memorial grounds but also websites or online search engines such as Google.

Overall and independent of their *modi*, informing practices characterize respondents' engagement with knowledge of the past through the narrations of others, including those articulated in mass media or through other communication technologies. That means that the information respondents receive always represents content that has in its novelty always been articulated and framed by other actors. Informing practices are neither based on respondents' own life experiences nor are they dominated by their own narrations about the past. The presented examples of informing practices have again illustrated the entanglement of national historical developments and personal histories in the narrations of respondents. For this reason, a clear distinction between national and family histories is not considered fruitful in conceptualizing informative practices of communicating memories in the everyday. They need to be considered across and in comparison to the categories of the national, familial, individual — the public, semi-public and private.

#### *6.2.1.2 Moral educating through Vietnamese and family histories*

Moral educating practices encompass those practices of people that **use historical information or past experiences to intentionally educate others by making a moral standpoint**. The subjective meaning of these practices is thus to clarify or make others understand moral values and normative principles in a given social entity such as the family or society at large. In the interview data, respondents usually identify these moral messages while discussing issues on the past in face-to-face conversations. That is why practices of moral education primarily coincide with forms of direct interpersonal communication.

Moral educating mainly occurs in familial or educational settings. It therefore affects (grand-)parent and (grand-)child relationships as well as teacher and student relations. Within the family context, moral educating articulates in family conversations about stories, experiences and characteristics of elder family members or in the familial teaching and perpetuation of literary forms of collective memory such as proverbs and folk tales.

The most common familial settings for moral educating, if explicitly mentioned, are family meals, particularly intergenerational family talks during dinner (see 6.1.1.1). I already pointed out earlier the significance of meals as a constituting ritual of the family and occasion for familial conversations (Keppler 1994). In anthropology, meals and food practices are considered to reflect relations between people and thus serve as "schematic replicas of the 'real world'" (Avieli 2012, 13). Eating practices in Vietnam for example reflect social hierarchies in terms of kinship relation, age and gender (*ibid.*, 57-58).

The dinner table talks respondents described in the context of this study usually aimed at teaching the value of food that cannot be taken for granted against family histories of

poverty and scarcity. Respect for food, generosity and frugality are key social values reflected in practices surrounding Vietnamese home meals (Avieli 2012, 58-59). The interview data further suggests that moral educating during meals serves to appreciate the status the family achieved given the great variety of dishes available today. Several informants across ages described moralizing table talks as a common practice.

*yes my family very poor, the first time when I eat something special, with me, but right now, it's normal, I share with them my feeling... and reason why I have...for example, the chicken, the people in city can eat every day, it's breakfast, the noodle, the lunch... every day. but before, it's my case, just only the some special... special time in a year, maybe three or 4 times and I [...] I just share my son and my daughter how I feel, [...] That's why I teach them in the past [...]* (Duy, I. 139)

In his account, Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) explained how he teaches his children that today taken-for-granted meat dishes had been a rare good when he grew up during the subsidized period in Vietnam. Meat dishes such as chicken used to be reserved for special occasions. Such occasions usually include feasts at death anniversaries, *Tet*, weddings or community festivals (Avieli 2012). While Duy did not provide details on the special events, it becomes apparent that he shared stories about his former food practices to teach his children not only about his former life conditions but also to respect food and thus social values in the present. Table talks in this regard serve as both spaces of moral education and of postmemory about times not lived (Hirsch 2012). They are instances of perpetuating norms and values of the elders' socialization to the younger family members. This kind of moral educating by communicating memories intergenerationally also aims at harmony and continuity within the family (Fowler/Fisher 2015, 210). It is a common pattern in the interview data, that familial and social values are always handed down from the elder to the younger and thus reflects Vietnamese social and age hierarchies (Jamieson 1995; Avieli 2012, 57-58). Similarly to informing practices, moral educating is therefore strongly hierarchical and requires unconditional respect towards elders when memories are communicated.

Moral educating does not only rely on past personal experiences but also makes use of perpetuated proverbs, tales and myths in familial conversations or in the school context. Both proverbs and folk tales contain moral messages and anticipate a normative picture of society and the relations between its members.

*Yes, my parents such as "Doi cha an man, doi con khat nuoc." In English if the father's life took a lot of salt, the son's life will be thirsty. Whenever today you have your meal, you take a lot of salt. After that, you get thirsty but here the proverb such as in the family transfer that "Doi cha an man, doi con khat nuoc." The father's life took a lot of salt, the son's life will be suffer. but problem is your father's living behavior is not good, his son will be suffer. Of course it's logically because Vietnam is agriculture so different about your country or Hanoi. Agriculture that means such as in Europe long time back, so that the family, this family know this family, know very well so if I live in*

*this family, this family, so I live here, I heard that this family is good, this family is bad so I will find the good way to treat you or might be careful with you. (Minh, l. 192)*

The proverb Minh (\*1959, Ninh Binh, DRV) learned from his parents again shows the metaphorical use of food to illustrate the social evil of greediness as well as generational and familial interdependence. The consequences of failures of the elder generation will trickle down to the next. The proverb thus emphasizes the responsibility of senior generations for the well-being of the family. It further reflects the Vietnamese understanding of family as a "synchronic entity" and "Continuum of Descent", deriving from Chinese Confucianism (Avieli 2012, 102). Minh explained how a lot of these proverbs originate from and apply to rural societies. Similarly, Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) addressed the rural-urban contrast by referring to "people in the city can eat everyday" (l. 139). Moral educating therefore also serves to narrow the discrepancies between rural socialization backgrounds of the elder with urban lifestyles of the younger who did not only grew up in the city but also in times of vast economic growth and an influx of new commodities. The examples illustrate that both, familial histories based on personal experiences or perpetuated knowledge of the past such as proverbs, function as more or less personalized metaphors for model characteristics and behavior in the family and society as a whole (see also Keppler 1994, 109).

### *6.2.1.3 Entertaining through Vietnamese TV shows, historical fiction and popular music*

Entertaining practices include communicative acts through which respondents seek or perceive amusement, pleasure or an affective connection to former times during their leisure time. In reception and media use theories, entertainment is often linked to relaxation, variation, stimulation, fun, felt harmony or escapism (Renger 2006, 290-291). In the memory context, the communicated content motivated by or perceived in these ways requires an angle to the past. Such angles to the past can be two-fold: the content directly addresses historical topics or the respondents themselves assign mnemonic meaning to the content as it is often the case with music. Entertaining practices in the context of this study therefore describe informants' **leisure time uses of past-related media content that serves their enjoyment, excitement and (re-)imagining of past times.**

In the interview data, the entertainment value is either expressed explicitly through respondents' positive evaluation of or affective relation to the respective content or implicitly derived from the genre. In contrast to informing practices, the gains of historical

information or information's accuracy are not prime concerns of entertaining, but it can certainly be a side effect of these practices.

In the research material, entertaining practices occur primarily in relation to mass-mediated forms of communicating memories. These forms include Vietnamese entertainment TV shows with a historical angle, historical fiction formats on Vietnamese state television and popular music of particular time periods. In this case study, entertaining practices thus coincide with particular programming formats on Vietnamese television. Informants, however, did not refer to the nostalgic soap operas that were subject of prior media research on nostalgia and Vietnamese popular television (Nguyen-Thu 2019).

Respondents do not always consider such media genres as historical per se. That is due to an obviously widespread understanding of "the historical" as factual and informative. If the content was not perceived as informative, it was less likely to be taken as a show "about the past". Entertainment practices are therefore more subtle ways of engaging with collective pasts in the everyday. The close relation of entertaining experiences with affects such as joy or nostalgia also makes these ways of collective remembering often more intimate and personal. If it had not been for the two stimuli on entertainment in the interview guidelines, entertainment practices would have hardly surfaced in the data. This more latent connection also explains why products of popular culture are often neglected in media use and memory research (Jacke/Zierold 2015, 86).

Similar to informing practices, entertainment practices show different degrees of preference. Respondents articulate these preferences, e.g. in the frequency and specific evaluation of the respective media content. Entertaining practices are always self-determined and based on informants' conscious decisions. They differ in this regard from informative practices that can also be obligatory as in school education.

Evaluations of aesthetics, production quality and background as well as the logics and dramaturgy of the storyline stay are decisive criteria in evaluating particular content.

*I think that movie make for improve collaboration between Japan and Vietnam. I do not know exactly it's Japanese editor or Vietnamese editor I think because logically in some parts is not very good. [...] No I just, I did not follow completely. I just saw some [!: Some scenes?] Because normally, the value of the movie normally for me is much better if developed from a novel. A novel is about logically story but here about some stories. They pick up some part, they put together. It not 01: 59: 00 (?) so I said that because it's for improve collaboration between two countries other than about artwork. I need about, of course no conflict. It should combine smoothly the artwork and this is better. (Minh, l. 145-151)*

In this example, Minh (\*1959, Ninh Binh, DRV) expressed how important the storyline of historically based movies or TV series is to him. It becomes apparent that he considers films as "artwork" rather than a source of information. This statement underlines the

entertainment aspect of turning to this kind of historical fiction series, not its historically informational value. Since his expectations on the series were not met and because he found the storyline not logical, however, he later stopped watching it. His assumption that the series is probably a politically motivated project for improving international relations was not considered a plus for the quality of the series.

Aesthetics and the quality of historical movies were a particular concern of younger respondents (e.g. Hai, Nhung, Hoa). The data indicates that younger informants who grew up with television and wide access to the global film industry have higher expectations of movie productions than elder respondents. They compare the quality of Vietnamese motion pictures with that of other countries.

*History movie about Vietnam so bad. [...] The way they do it is so stupid. They make the people try to stay far away. Like it's so bad. I don't watch it. [...] They waste a lot of money to do some stupid stuff like this. People, they are tired. They don't like. They don't give the government the chance to say how great about history anymore because the way they do it is so bad. [...]*

*Have you ever watch any movie about the war like in very bad like at the time people still use (?) or spear or (?)? You watch and you say it spend billion VND to make this movie and I can see nearly that the soldiers completely, nearly make by (?). I can say it's not the (?) because every time they wave the hand [LAUGHING]. (?) so new. It's completely new. You can see that nearly even the soldier like you have a war and you run around, around, around.(?). So bad especially when now they broadcast the movie from another country and you compare movies. (Hai, l. 131-133)*

As in the example of Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) criticism of Vietnamese historical fiction in the interview data usually refers to the qualification and choice of directors, actors as well as production resources. He particularly pointed out "retro-signifiers" (Reivofa et al. 2013, 207) such as historical weapons as unauthentically displayed. Hai further criticized the inappropriate amount of state funding that goes into these productions. The perceived lack of professionalism remains the main reason among respondents of the post-unification and post-reform eras to turn to other international productions, e.g. Chinese historical fiction. For some informants, these differences in professionalism presented also an explanation for why young Vietnamese know more about Chinese than Vietnamese national history.

*And for China because they make a lot of film about their country, about their history. Also we know more, more than Vietnam because we just watching TV, watching film and it is just like absorbing slowly, slowly about that. The one is my favorite movie that I have told you that Hoan Chau cong chua. That is about the Tan Emperor in China. We even know what emperor they have because based on such films [laughing]. Their making of films is a success. (Hoa, l. 129)*

All of the previous examples referred to historical fiction and popcultural formats in which aesthetics and the production quality of audiovisuals played a crucial role in imagining times not lived. Although historical factuality of the storyline is not key for entertaining practices, the visual representation needed to be convincing in order to be taken seriously or to catch the attention of viewers. This finding adds to Welzer et al.'s (2002, 199-200)

observations of the more detail and impression the film showed, the more vivid were descriptions about the time not lived.

Despite production quality, another criterion for entertaining practices to be carried out is whether respondents can establish an affective connection to mediated content. While affective reactions occur in the course of informing practices as well, they are less common than in entertainment contexts. This affective connection to mediated content, e.g. songs in a music entertainment show, often relates to personally experienced pasts.

*Ah, it's "Proud Melodies". That is very interesting. So I watch it very often. I like that very much. [...] There are also a few times when I heard the older songs, tears came to my eyes. But maybe the younger generation can't understand that. Because they have only heard stories about it, so they haven't experienced or endured it themselves. Therefore they can't know how much these songs have been able to imprint themselves on our minds. (Hang, l. 99/106)*

Hang's (\*1959, Hanoi, DRV) review of her viewing habits of the entertainment television show *Giai Dien Tu Hao* on VTV1 clearly illustrates the strong emotional connection she felt about the songs performed in the show. The show features mostly revolutionary music, *nhac do*. Hang's emotional resonance is based on her revolutionary socialization and own experience of wartimes in Vietnam. At an earlier stage in the interview, she reported how she witnessed the enlistment and loss of many of her male classmates during her youth (Hang, l. 85). In the quote, Hang describes the affect of grief by telling she had been in tears while listening to the songs of the show. Notably, she stressed the listening experience and therefore the auditive elements of the mediated content. This finding underscores prior research that suggested that music functions as "time-travel tropes" (Pickering/Keightley 2015, 70) into particular life stages and as "emotional containers" (Hartung 2009, 117). It is Hang's own life experience during her youth and unintended relived emotions in that moment of reception that connects her to the music performances of *Giai Dien Tu Hao*. It is this affective connection that then makes her identify with and assign mnemonic meaning to the mediated content.

Both media-related informing practices and entertaining practices can directly draw on and revive personal life experiences. In this sense, communicating memories through informing and entertaining practices can ultimately relate to cognitive and affective processes that trigger memories if they resonate with personal life experiences. Informing practices, however, focus on knowledge gain in the narrations of respondents whereas entertaining practices are more concerned with the aesthetic, sensory and dramaturgic ways that past-related content is presented and emotionally perceived. Since such personal connections can conjure up spontaneously during the reception process and draw from individual

experience, the mnemonic value of particular media content cannot be estimated on the basis of content only (Mihelj 2017, 240-241).

Compared to informing and moral education practices the variety and scope of entertaining practices is smaller.

#### 6.2.1.4 *Commemorating ancestors, national heroes and historical events*

Commemorating practices encompass all those communicative acts that serve **to keep the memory of a past event or deceased person alive** in present contexts. They often constitute ritualized practices. Commemorating is highly normative, as these practices follow particular moral standards and usually stand for gestures of respect, honor, gratitude, filial piety and repaying moral debt. Commemorating practices are not necessarily based on personal experience or witnessing of the commemorated event or person.

Practices of commemoration are not confined to specific forms of communication but cut across them. Commemorating can be perpetuated as ritualized practice in processes of socialization. In this perpetuated form, commemorating can be the result of practices of moral education, personal and cultural beliefs.

In the context of this study, commemorating ranges over a wider variety of sub-practices, occasions and contexts. First, commemorating practices can take place at the familial level in the form of worshipping ancestors on particular festive holidays or family-specific days such as death anniversaries (*ngay gio*). Second, commemorating practices can take a national angle, particularly with regard to official holidays or commemorative days that honor historical events, figures or other outstanding persons such as veterans.

Malarney (2007, 521-522) remarked that remembering and worshipping the ancestors (*nho on*) is "one of the most basic moral responsibilities of all Vietnamese". Filial piety (*hieu*) and moral debt (*on*) towards parents and ancestors are core values in Vietnamese families as "models for social organization" and taught to children early on (Jamieson 1995, 16). Ancestors, although deceased, are understood as an integral part of the family and family life in the world of the living.

[...] worship of ancestors [...] offers a means of maintaining ongoing relationships with loved ones, publicly demonstrating economic success and moral debt, seeking moral guidance and furthering projects of self-cultivation, intervening in the affairs of the living and building or maintaining lineage and family networks. As companions, meritorious forebears and moral creditors, ancestors remain potent spiritual beings whose efficacious interventions result from an ongoing cycle of nurture and remembrance that binds children to parents and descendants to ancestors long after biological death. (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 438)

Commemorating the ancestors as one way of engaging with collective pasts is thus a practice of repaying moral debt (*on*). In this regard, commemorating is a familial, moral and social obligation that comes with one's mere existence. It transcends the biological cycle of life and death.

The interview data illustrates that communicative practices for ancestor worship usually coincide with other ritual performances. Communicative acts of commemoration usually refer to family conversations about the personal characteristics of a deceased family member, including their eating preferences. Eating preferences are for example an important subject during commemorations on *ngày giỗ* (death anniversary day) when family members prepare the favorite dish of the deceased and offer it with incense at the family altar (e.g. Thuy, l. 67). Once more the data indicates the entanglement of food and mnemonic practices.

*Maybe the most culture that the family [...] like to, to pass on the, the knowledge of the ancestor: to respect the ancestor and to remember the day that ancestor like in the New Year we have to pray and we have to cook, we have to cook for the ancestor and like for the day, the day that ancestor for your grandma die and to remember that day and you have to pray for them at that day (Trung, l. 260)*

Trung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) similarly described ancestor worship as a key component of Vietnamese culture and knowledge that is passed from generation to generation. His account shows how ancestor worship as commemorating practice coincides with cooking and praying rites (see also Avieli 2012). His phrasing of "we have to" and "you have to" signals obligation. Since the worlds of the dead and the living are understood to be connected and interdependent (Jellema 2007; DiGregorio/Salemink 2007) and some people do engage in discussions with the ancestors (Jamieson 1995, 24), we need to extend general conceptions of communication as the exchange of symbolic meaning among the living only. In the context of this study, commemorating as mnemonic communication practice does therefore not only include conversations among the living but also between the living and the dead.

During *Tết* holidays similar commemoration practices take place when ancestors are invited to return to their former or their descendants' homes as part of annual renewal rites and to celebrate the family as "a living entity" (Jamieson 1995, 28).

Commemoration practices usually do not solely address familial ancestors but include worshipping practices of other more general ancestors that are considered deities, guardian and tutelary spirits or national heroes. The interview data demonstrates how this second form of commemorating practices transgresses the boundaries of the familial and the national, the spiritual, mythical and the political realms. In prior historical and

anthropological research, we have seen how varying Vietnamese state governments strategically built upon cultural everyday practices and beliefs in order to implement measures of memory politics in their favor (Tréglodé 2012; Kwon 2006; Malarney 2007; Dror 2017). Some respondents' MCRs illustrate how worshipping national heroes has also become an activity carried out in the domestic sphere of peoples' homes. The domestic ancestral altar then does not only serve the commemoration of deceased family members but also considered national heroes such as Ho Chi Minh.

*And, you can see even in my house [brother arrives and says hello] and other house in Vietnam, we have the picture of Ho Chi Minh. It's in my first floor and in my fifth floor, we have the altar of him, so yeah. We really appreciate what he did for us. He was the one who bring peace for us. (Nhung, l. 121)*

Nhung's (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) description of her home shows how closely intertwined commemorating familial ancestors and national heroes can be if dominating ideological and cultural beliefs in society match the ones of the family. The repeated visual presence of Ho Chi Minh at various, including sacred, spots in her house underscores the integration of Ho's personality cult into family affairs. Nhung's expression of appreciation reflects the social values of filial piety (*bien*) and moral debt (*on*). It is remarkable, however, that in this case, they do not apply to hierarchical family structures but to the relationship of the leader and his people. Nhung's example of commemorating practices of Ho illustrates the intimacy that evolved through this way of communicating memories about considered national heroes. Denominations of Ho as the "Uncle to the whole nation" (Tai 1995, 274), the "father of the Vietnamese Revolution" (*ibid.*, 275) and "natural successor of the nation's heroic ancestors" (Tréglodé 2012, 11) articulate this intimacy. The empirical data additionally shows that this affection is also brought into practice through everyday commemorating in people's homes and beyond.

Another kind of commemorating practice is attending public commemorative events, including traditional music festivals or commemorations of national public figures. Again, Ho Chi Minh and other revolutionary heroes feature prominently in the data.

*The biggest festival in my province is Lang Sen festival. It is to remember Uncle Ho. It is the day Uncle Ho was born in the 19th in May. Yeah. In my province have Lang Sen festival. In the festival, people can listen to folk songs, *dan ca*, *vi dam*, visit the house of Uncle Ho, visit museum, visit some places around the house of Uncle Ho. Yeah. (Nhien, l. 249-250)*

*On that day, I and my husband stood in a queue to pray for him [Vo Nguyen Giap] and to said goodbye to him. On that day I lost a mobile phone. [...] We had to stood all the day, a long queue. [...] The thief broke into my house and took my mobile phone. [...] My husband said to me that ok we lost a mobile phone but Mr. Vo Nguyen Giap will pray for us so we would be successful in the future. Don't worry. Don't regret about it. (Linh, l. 175-180)*

Nhien (\*1980, Nghe An, SRV), who was born in Ho Chi Minh's home province, again pointed out the significance of commemorating "Uncle Ho". While spiritual festivals were partially banned or discouraged in the DRV and SRV between the 1950s and late 1980s (Malarney 2007, 515, 521) they regained popularity after *Doi Moi* (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433). Vietnam scholars often attributed semi-religious features to such commemorative festivals for national heroes that are not necessarily encouraged by the state but by local communities (ibid., 435; Giebel 2001, 77).

The commemorative and mourning practice for Vo Nguyen Giap that Linh (\*1979, Thai Binh, SRV) described in the second quote has been a similar bottom-up initiative. Several respondents reported that the long queue in Hanoi formed because of people's wish to pay tribute to the deceased general and minister. Linh's account once more illustrates the perceived interconnectedness of the other world and the world of the living as well as the attribution of considered heroes with supernatural powers that are believed to persist in the spirit realm (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433). She and her husband believed that the shown gratitude towards Vo would compensate for the loss of her new smartphone and secure their future successes. National heroes are considered exemplary men (Tréglodé 2012). Commemorating them thus reveals insights on what values or ideologies commemorators or mourners appreciate in their everyday life and for their society. The examples suggest that the power of commemorating and believing in national heroes does not only rest upon what has been witnessed, communicated or studied in schools about their historical achievements, but also the embeddedness of their worship into people's common or everyday cultural practices at home or at public commemorative events. Often commemoration practices of national heroes are carried out on particular occasions such as birthdays, death anniversaries or historical events related to the national figure.

The last point in this subchapter refers to the commemoration of historical events. Some historical events such as "Independence Day" or "Liberation Day" were granted the status of a public holiday by the communist government. This status provides them an outstanding position in the annual calendar and thus the everyday lives of a hard-working urban middle-class. The majority of respondents usually used such commemorative public holidays for leisure time activities with family and friends or to rest but not specifically for commemorative practices although these days were technically considered "important days" of the year. We therefore see a difference in the significance of commemorating actual persons and events in the everyday. While a significant proportion of informants commemorates certain honored figures, the commemoration of historical events is usually

only noticed by respondents through the wide presence of mass-mediated anniversary content but it is not necessarily part of an annual routine in their everyday lives. One reason for this difference might be that commemorating heroes match easier with other cultural everyday practices such as ancestor worship and second their considered model characteristics can be easier applied to everyday social concerns such as parenting and education than historical events. Significant commemorating practices in people's everyday lives therefore are usually personified and rarely devoted to (national) historical events. From a Western perspective, it is also remarkable that in Vietnam, there is no official public holiday in commemoration of a traumatic historical event (e.g. My Lai massacre; Kwon 2006, 20). While some respondents did mention traumatic memories, these usually did not translate into commemorative practices. The data therefore suggests that commemorating foregrounds positive values and ideals of society. Commemoration as a warning about moral failure or loss as common in Western conceptions of commemorating is not part of respondents' MCRs. Commemorating practices are likely to overlap with entertaining practices, e.g. in the case of commemorative festivals or informing practices, e.g. during visits of memorial grounds.

#### *6.2.1.5 Sharing memories and networking within social groups*

Sharing memories and networking denote communicative practices of **reciprocal exchange about collective pasts** that are **geared towards building, nurturing or reaffirming social ties** within a particular group or social relation. These practices usually coincide with forms of direct and mediated interpersonal communication. Mass-mediated communication does not provide the needed degree of reciprocity for sharing. While sharing memories and networking through them, respondents target particular people or defined groups. Reciprocal communicative exchange and specific addresses are central to these practices of mnemonic communication.

In contrast to informing and entertaining practices, sharing and networking are always based on people's own personal, autobiographic experiences and narratives about the past. They either built upon already existing ties or concentrate on establishing new ties. When social ties existed previously, sharing memories usually relies on the common experience of group members as in the case of familial ties or friendship. Sharing memories within such existing groups therefore represents a kind of in-group communication on commonly lived experience or common knowledge about the past. Hirst and Manier (2002, 41-42) called this kind of collective memory "collective episodic memory", through which spatial and temporal information of a common event is remembered. For in-group members, the

knowledge shared is therefore not necessarily new as in contrast to informing. Keppler's (2001) observations of communicative practices during familial slide shows on holidays etc. represent such sharing practices of collective episodic memories. In the interview data from Vietnam, sharing practices on commonly lived experiences, e.g. referred to common school experiences, stays abroad or war experiences.

*Yeah, once, once per year, every year, in October. [I: why in October?] Because we left Vietnam to Russia in October, so we consider it is the good time for us to memorize, to memorize about the time, when we lived and worked in Russia. (Huong, l. 76)*

For Huong (\*1959, Thua Thien-Hue, RVN) and her friends, the departure from their conflict-ridden home country to work for Vietnam's ally the Soviet Union was a privilege and a decisive moment in their personal biographies. This life event and the following time period abroad created a common ground of experiences and thus the basis for social bonds of the group. Members of the group identify themselves with it through this collective episodic or autobiographical memory (Hirst/Manier 2002, 41-42) of having lived and worked in the Soviet Union. It is the founding momentum for the existence of the group. The common annual meetings on the day of their departure serve not only as a reminder for a meaningful life event for each member of the group, but also as an occasion for everyone to ritually refresh memories and commonly synchronize their knowledge. Developing common narratives in this regard can bring forth "collective autobiographical memories" (ibid., 42). In the sociology of remembering, such ritualized practices of sharing memories of times past are therefore often interpreted as reactualization of group identities in present and changing times (Halbwachs 1992, 50; Knoblauch 1999, 734; Davis 1979, 39).

In Vietnam, these ritualized sharing practices of collective episodic memory can be further encouraged by culturally established rites on special days such as Teacher's Day or *Tet*. On Teacher's Day (*ngày nba giao*) for example, students visit their recent and former teachers, recall common experiences at school, show gratitude and update recent news in life. In a similar vein, traditions during Tet holidays provide the frame for sharing practices among family members of the nuclear family and beyond as well as between students and teachers. Such holidays or special days provide cultural frames to keep each other updated and nurture existing relations.

Besides collective episodic memory based on commonly experienced events (Hirst/Manier 2002, 41-42), we may also think of that concept in a wider sense. Prior memory research showed that social bonds can also increasingly be built upon the sharing of similar episodic

memories despite spatial and temporal distances and without previously existing social ties (Thimm/Nehls 2017). Communicating memories on the basis of non-existing or loser ties can for example concern people affected by a common or similar fate as the tragic loss of a person (Offerhaus 2016) or the experience of political violence (Jones 2012). Co-presence at the same past event is not required, but empathy. In the interview data from Vietnam, sharing and networking for mnemonic reasons and on the basis of non-existing ties is rarely reflected in respondents' MCRs (exception: An). In this sense, sharing and networking practices rather serve the building of existing bonds than establishing new ones on the grounds of a similar fate.

Similar fates and a wider understanding of collective episodic memory, however, can also play a role in nurturing and intensifying priorly existing but loser ties. Linh (\*1979, Thai Binh, SRV) for example described how she shared autobiographic memories of her first love with her befriended coworkers.

*To some my close friends, sometimes we - it means the friends in my office, the colleagues-had a rest after lunch. We often talk about first love and I also join with them. I told them about my first love. (Linh, l. 100)*

The example shows how intimate memories, although separately experienced, built common ground for mnemonic conversations. They drive social interaction during lunch break at Linh's office and create a sense of commonality beyond office work. The high degree of intimacy of these memories attests to a high level of trust and openness about ones personal past among coworkers. Although every single person in the group experienced their first love differently, sharing these past stories intensifies their social relation beyond the professional context. The degree of intimacy of shared autobiographic memories thus can indicate the assigned level of trust among group members. At the same time, the working context offers Linh (\*1979, Thai Binh, SRV) a safe space to reminisce her first love experience that she otherwise may not mention out of respect towards her present family. Linh also hinted at the regular cycle of these lunch break talks. The ritualization of such sharing practices also present in Huong's example underscore the function of these kind of mnemonic practices for nurturing and reassuring social bonds.

Such measures of building or reaffirming social ties and group identities usually take a distinct, voluntary and conscious effort in engaging with collective pasts and thus generally qualify as memory work (Kuhn 2010; Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014). Sharing and networking practices therefore require a certain degree of involvement with a particular social group or

identification with others' collective episodic memories in order to be willing to take communicative action.

Because sharing and networking practices rest upon autobiographic experience and episodic memory, they can carry emotional weight. Such sentimental baggage seems to be key for empathy and thus the connections with others. The emotional weight can e.g. be articulated in the form of yearning for "lost" times or places (Davis 1979) as often observed for the community of Vietnamese refugees in the US (Valverde 2003; Großheim 2010). The interview data from Vietnam shows only few instances of nostalgia, however (e.g. An, Hung). Sharing and networking practices differ in the degree of intimacy of memories shared and in the actors addressed. Depending on these criteria, it is possible to gain a closer view of how people perceive and navigate their social relationships.

In contrast to informing and moral educating, sharing practices tend to describe horizontal rather than hierarchical communicative acts. They can also refer to very recent pasts and experiences (van Dijck 2007, 114) when respondents want to share what just had happened through Facebook for example (e.g. Nhung). Other than informing and entertaining, sharing and networking do not necessarily add missing elements on a topic or stocks of knowledge, but usually draw from already existing elements of the repertoire or life experience. The feature of reviving memories in ritualized sharing practices overlaps with the characteristics of commemorating. Commemorating practices, however, do not require a commonly shared or similar experiential ground in time and space. Moreover, the subject of commemoration or revival does not need to be based on own lived experiences.

#### *6.2.1.6 Creating and archiving mnemonic objects*

Creating and archiving includes communicative acts that aim at **producing organizing or preserving (media) objects as mnemonic records**. In the context of this study, creating and archiving mainly refers to photographic practices. Theoretically, however, mnemonic records could be any material object people assign mnemonic value to, including mass-produced objects or pictures.

Creating and archiving personalized mnemonic objects such as family or holiday photographs usually serve to document certain autobiographic life experiences that can be used for other future mnemonic practices such as informing (6.2.1.1), commemorating (6.2.1.4) or sharing (6.2.1.5). Creating and archiving thus sets the basis for other MCPs, particularly those related to direct communication and mediated interpersonal communication. Creating organizing and archiving personal photographs are MCPs that are usually not as explicitly described by informants. They are very routinized; sometimes

so quickly and spontaneously applied in the everyday that they hardly stick out as a conscious communicative practice to people. The uses of photographs in mnemonic contexts span from taking, archiving to organizing them in a family album and reviewing them in different social settings (Keightley/Pickering 2014; Langford 2006, 2008).

*Yea, I love to share pictures and funny moments. And funny topics that I think. One of the most popular thing I use to my Facebook is share the picture of, maybe like everybody else, I share the selfie of myself or I share the beautiful place that I have visited, maybe the place I travelled. I take pictures and I share them. And I share picture from my family or the greeting to everybody once the new year comes or the party birthday or I use the Facebook to contact to everybody or to gather everybody. (Yen, l. 73)*

*The way I see it, at Tet fest you might just watch the news, otherwise there are too few people who are just at home watching TV. [...] But you won't sit in front of the television all day. Maybe there are some, but not so often. Otherwise you go outside, picnic, excursion, take pictures or something. (Hang, l. 116)*

Yen's (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV) photographic habits underscore earlier findings of this and prior studies on personal photography as practice and technology of remembering. What is documented are outstanding and significant life experiences such as travels, family events on cultural holidays and rites of passage (Pickering/Keightley 2013). Hang's (\*1959, Hanoi, DRV) account confirms the significance of taking photographs in the holiday context. The ability to travel expressed in these examples is a particular commodity of new urban middle classes in Vietnam (Earl 2014).

Yen further set the focus on personal emotions and aesthetics ("selfies", "beautiful place") in capturing moments in her life. In a lot of cases, however, respondents emphasized the aspect of sharing life events with others as they happen in creating photographs. Prospective sharing therefore seems to be a greater motivation than actual archiving and preserving the captured experiences. Van Dijck (2007, 48) has noted such a shift from producing and archiving to producing and sharing in the course of digitization. The advent of the Internet in Vietnam in the early 2000s and the following quick distribution of digital technologies has allowed for easier production, circulation and archiving of personal photographs altogether. While photography was generally scarce before *Doi Moi*, there was technically only a short time span for analog photography to become established for everyday use before digital technologies arrived in Vietnam. Producing, printing and collecting analog photographs are relatively rare practices in respondents' MCRs. Young informants often considered the organization of analog photographs a parental task.

*oh well, (kichern), I used to have this photo albums. Just old photos of me as a kid, but those mostly were taken by my parents and I don't have, frankly I don't have much interest in them, which may have something to do with the fact that I look really ugly as a kid. (giggling) (Binh, l. 57)*

*Well, like (...) in the picture, I was holding a teddy bear which is kind of really almost equally my side. Okay so it really as be at my side and then my teacher she hug me may be she was hugging me from behind and we and then and then. Another picture is like two teachers they were try to you know lift lift me up and then they kiss me. [...] My mother keep them for me. (Trung, l. 14; l. 34-36)*

*About, before 2010, I use, I usually use the camera to capture all the moments or the memory and I have the album and I stick all the picture there follow the time. (Nga, l. 71)*

While taking and viewing analog photographs occur across all age groups in the study, Binh (\*1994, Hanoi, SRV) and Trung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) describe the archiving of these photographs as parental responsibility. Nga (\*1994, Hanoi, SRV) who still collected and organized printed photographs herself described it as an outdated practice. Yet, what all these interactions with photographs as mnemonic records have in common irrespective of who is their actual keeper is their self-reflexive function (Kuhn/McAllister 2006, 2). As still images or arranged sequences of images, they leave room for contemplation (ibid. 1; Langford 2006, 225).

In later stages of life, they serve as a reference point for one's subjective positioning in time and space. Binh and Trung vividly practiced this reflection in regard to their childhood. For Trung, the photographs help him to trace the significant stages of his lifetime and stress the popularity he received as a young child from his teachers. Binh on the other hand disliked his appearance as a child. These self-reflexive processes contribute to construct an autobiographic narrative of oneself while looking at and reflecting on the kept photograph. Since this reception process is a cognitive one, it cannot be traced in the interviews unless respondents themselves recount their thoughts on particular keepsakes.

More common than the practice of compiling photo albums are the practices of displaying them in the house — especially in the living room or on the ancestral altar — or uploading them on SNS. Displayed pictures in the home usually function as constant reminders of e.g. familial heritage unity (e.g. Huong, Nhung), important life events or the beauty of youth. Digital photographs on SNS, fulfill both functions: they are archived but also ready to be shared at any time. Although SNS such as Facebook potentially have a wide reach, most respondents reported about sharing images with family, friends and colleagues and thus previously existing social circles.

*So I also have a Facebook address. [...] Facebook for normal life [...] This is normal, e.g. this is one says for what I have from one day, e.g. for today, I take a photo and store it there for memory. [...] All activities of mine and then I have on Facebook so. (Hieu, l. 47-53)*

*The second thing is maybe when I make up an album on Facebook. It has to be the big event for me or something I have to organize it or other ones like the, the, the LAtest album I posted is about the Americas' day that I organize with other friends. (Nhung, l. 71)*

The example of Hieu (\*1957, Vinh Phuc, DRV) shows first, that for some informants, SNS — similarly to analog albums — function as a digital archive for photographic records. Second, the use of SNS in relation to creating, preserving and sharing practices is not age-specific. At least for members of the urban middle class, creating and archiving in present-day Vietnam is no longer a prime question of costs or availability of media technologies as it was during analog times. Despite his age, Hieu is well familiar with digital technologies and even less selective about what he uploads and posts than student Nhung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV). It seems as if postwar scarcity and the accelerated media development after *Doi Moi* has smoothed out generational differences to some extent. That particularly surfaces in practices of creating and archiving mnemonic objects such as digital photographs.

In Nhung's and many other cases, it remains open to discussion what the specific mnemonic value of instant sharing of photographs about a just experienced event is. Usually, these events were too recent for respondents to assess whether these digital albums will play a role for future practices of remembering. That would require longitudinal or follow-up studies.

The interview data showed only rare cases in which personalized mnemonic objects had mnemonic significance beyond family and peer contexts. The Facebook group "Old people of Saigon" (*Dan Saigon Xua*) represents a mnemonic community whose members post personal digitized photographs of pre-1975 Saigon who then serve as digital mnemonic objects for other members of the group who might not possess analog photographs of that time or places themselves (An, l. 75-77).

Creating and archiving practices generally occur less frequently and are less varied in the interview data compared to other MCPs. Particularly for photographic practices, however, they often set the basis for other future mnemonic practices as discussed in the previous subchapters.

#### **6.2.1.7 Participating in institutionalized memory work**

Participating in institutionalized memory work comprises communicative acts that aim at the **involvement in institutional mnemonic agendas and initiatives as a leisure activity**. Participating practices are therefore driven by a strong commitment to and identification with organizations involved in such programs or by a strong personal interest in the respective mnemonic matter. Practices of participation are usually concerned with the national history or cultural heritage of Vietnam and therefore less based on personal life

experience. In the context of this study, participating generally coincided with mnemonic forms of mass-mediated and direct communication.

In the interview data, participation practices include publishing about historical places for a magazine, taking part in college campaigns (e.g. *Mua he xanh*) on national and cultural heritage or professional team-building trips (*Chuyen di tham quan du lich*) to historical sites.

*When my office had a holiday, we often went to the places related to our history because our participants are mainly staff and cadres from the ministry. Our office often organized a short holiday to go there, to historical places so I love Uncle Ho too. [...] I went to Tuyen Quang and Pac Po where our Uncle Ho lived there when the war happen. At that time he came back from foreigner. He didn't want to stay in Hanoi or HCM city. It means he want to live hidely- ần. He didn't want anyone to know about him. He moved to Pac Po and he live in very, very small, not a house. (Linh, l. 80-82)*

Working for a state body, Linh (\*1979, Thai Binh, SRV) spoke very positively about the chance to attend recreational and team-building trips to historical places in Vietnam offered by her ministerial employer. She named these trips as one reason for her affection for Ho Chi Minh. While Linh expressed her own belief and interest in the life and ideology of Ho Chi Minh as a driver for participating in the trip, it needs to be noted, however, that her work environment with government members also hardly allows for alternate views. State-structured leisure and recreation as these trips organized by the workplace have become common since the early 1980s in Vietnam. They are usually not confined to historical sights but also include other cultural events or international travels. After unification, participating in such recreational and cultural activities also depended on a family's social and political background (Earl 2014, 139).

Besides such politically significant historical sights, institutionalized Vietnamese memory work in the context of this study is tightly linked to what is conceived of as cultural heritage. Usually participating in memory work on cultural heritage implies a certain pride in the history of the mnemonic places and objects for respondents. Their motivation is therefore to preserve it and present it to others.

*I like to write in story because, for example when I visit some interesting place I... like Sapa, you know sapa? I visit sapa, after that I can take a lot of photos, the people and then scene or something like that and I write for the magazine, the tourist magazine [...] sometimes, I spend time to visit some pagoda, pagoda in Vietnam because I am Buddhist, actually I am Buddhist so I spend a lot of time there. Because sometimes if I leave, stay in the pagoda I can write, I can share with the people history of the pagoda and maybe I can share with them the my feeling... For example, last week I have one article in the newspaper, I share with the one pagoda that I've just visit last month, last month is the first of this year, the first day of this year, I spend time to visit, in the Thai Nguyen province [...] (Duy, l. 30)*

Publishing on historical matters and cooperating with the publishing industry as a public memory actor as Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) did is an exceptional case in the interview data of this study. He combined his own personal interest in the cultural history of

Vietnam with the publishing interests of a tourist magazine or newspaper and thus spreads the knowledge about what he considered the treasures of his culture. At the same time he needed to adhere to the editorial guidelines of the publisher.

Another case in which institutional motivation overlaps with intrinsic and personal interest is Nhung's (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) voluntary service as a free tour guide at historical sights in Hanoi. The program was organized by her university. Summer campaigns such as the "Green Summer" campaign (*Mùa hè xanh*) have been common in Vietnam's Soviet-influenced higher education system; they aim at educating good socialist citizens (Doan 2005). While the educational initiative Nhung (l. 221) described might be regarded as a historical campaign by the university as a state institution, it also left freedom for her to research her own information about the assigned sights. Participating in this case is entangled with informing practices.

Participating in institutionalized memory work can also be prompted by and embedded into official commemorative days such as Martyrs' Day.

*It is July, 27th. it is the day, when Vietnamese people and the Government always organize very big festival to memorize the people who died, who sacrifice for the nation, to the nation. On this day, yeah, we often gather together and gather together and organize meeting organize meeting to praise, to say about the (...) to say, to say about the people who died for the nation and thank them, my many activities. [l: Where do you usually gather?] At school, at school, at university. (Huong, l. 152-154)*

Huong (\*1959, Huế, RVN) described the mnemonic activities at her workplace in addition to governmental initiatives. In this example, participating in institutionalized memory work includes commemoration practices for veterans. Originating from a revolutionary family, it is likely that Huong's commitment is not only conceived of as professional but also as a social duty to repay moral debt (*on*) to parents and revolutionary veterans in Vietnamese society. *On* is expressed in her felt need to pay tribute to those who "sacrificed" themselves "for the nation". Again, the boundaries of the professional, leisure and familial contexts are not clear-cut. The previous examples (Linh, Duy, Nhung, Huong) showed respondents that all share a certain commitment about their participation in institutionalized memory work. This commitment, however, is always in line with the state organization's mnemonic agenda.

The interview data also revealed a case in which participating in institutionalized memory work of the state was forced. As the son of an ARVN colonel, Dan (\*1954, Binh Thuan, SVN) was not allowed to continue working in his original profession as a journalist after 1975. Well educated in English, he had to work for a tourist agency to make a living for

him and his family after unification. Contrary to other informants, Dan disliked his participation in institutionalized memory work.

*I don't pay much attention to these places. No, I don't have any opinion. No place is of importance to me. Every place is the same. This location. (giggling) So if I go there, I go there. I don't like any places, I don't like. If I have to go, I go. I don't go there because I like it. [...] I have no opinion about that? I don't care. (laughing) I may be an organizer for such tours e.g. because I worked in the tourism, in the travel but I don't like it. (Dan, l. 166-168)*

Refraining from taking any opinion on historical sights and distancing himself from his involvement in the state's and tourism sector's memory agendas hints at the fact that he does not comply with the official narrative of public memory in Vietnam. Deprived of his former cultural life and career opportunities in Saigon, Dan (\*1954, Binh Thuan, SVN) does not seem to relate to the historical sights popularized in present-day Vietnam. He does not attribute any meaning to them.

Overall the interview data indicated that institutionalized memory work is mainly encouraged or carried out by state bodies as extra-curricular or leisure time activities (e.g. *Mua he xanh, Chuyen di tham quan du lich*). In most cases, committed participation requires a sense of national pride or of professional or moral obligation. Personal beliefs must correspond to a large degree to the mnemonic agenda of institutions involved. Participating in institutionalized memory work occurred in combination with practices of informing and commemorating. Practices of participation, however, are less commonly represented in respondents' MCRs than previously discussed MCPs.

### 6.2.2 Practices of negotiation

Practices of negotiation address a second major type of MCPs. People negotiate when they encounter different versions of collective pasts. The aim of practices of negotiation is to **make sense and ease such discrepancies**. In order to resolve such inconsistencies, negotiating always involves a comparative approach to respondents' MCR components. From an analytical perspective, we look at how informants' relate the single components of their MCRs to each other.

The repertoire approach to mnemonic communication allows for a more encompassing view on which sources and stocks of knowledge people access and appropriate to make sense of the past. The empirical data shows that respondents do compare the different sources and mnemonic content in order to gain a larger picture. That, however, requires that these MCR components deal with the same topic, e.g. a respondent compares what he or she learned at school about famines in Vietnam with stories told about hunger in the

family. Negotiating can take place in the course of a discussion of varying standpoints but also in reflection of one's different imaginations or stocks of knowledge about a topic appropriated over time.

Besides fitting diverse interpretations of collective memories, negotiating means also dealing with knowledge or imaginatory gaps or contentious memories. Such difficult or contentious memories refer to either traumatic experiences whose articulation is often inhibited or to non-consensual knowledge about the past. Because contentious content or knowledge is not agreed upon yet, they usually confront or question official public memory (see 4.2.1.) and thus require negotiation with dominant views. Informants themselves did not always explicitly express the contentious nature of certain memories and mnemonic practices in their MCRs. Prior research on hegemonic and subordinate interpretations of collective memory in Vietnam, however, allows for estimating which practices and statements diverge from dominant ones.

The subchapter on negotiation practices encompasses four sub-practices of respondents to navigate different stocks of knowledge and to deal with contentious collective memories. These sub-practices include complementing memories, discussing, witnessing and avoiding contentious memories. All avoidance strategies in dealing with difficult or contentious memories include aspects of forgetting as they lead to filtered versions of collective memories. Looking at avoiding strategies in communicating memories elicits social taboos of remembering and reasons for collective forgetting (Connerton 2008).

#### 6.2.2.1 *"Filling the gaps": Complementing*

As a result of comparing different components in their MCRs, respondents add and match bits and pieces of content and knowledge about the past. Complementing practices are applied **when people miss certain bits of information or features** in a particular MCR component. They aim at **filling** those **particular gaps** and occur across forms of communication.

Lacking information means that interviewees feel that certain information about the past is not complete or balanced. Lacking features means they miss particular sensory impressions such as visualizations about collective pasts. Characteristics of means of communication and media specificity therefore matter for complementing as different media technologies address and require different sensory modes.

Cat (\*1971, Bac Lieu, RVN) for example described how television as media technology widened her understanding and imagination of historical sights and conflicts in Vietnam through its visual input:

*Even, even Vietnamese too, even the documentary films about Vietnam War or Dien Bien Phu or, yes, a lot of hardships of the people during the war and especially we could see a lot of beautiful sight-seeings of different places we haven't been there, but thanks to the beautiful pictures on TV and we, we could imagine and we could... how to say, we could imagine and... we could understand things. (Cat, l. 58)*

Cat's statement suggests that the visual imagery that television technology provided added another layer to previous knowledge and thus complemented her historical consciousness. The example supports media theoretical observations that audiovisual media technologies enable people to experience non-experienced collective pasts (Ebbrecht 2010, 341; Landsberg 2004, 2). It further underscores empirical findings on complementing from research carried out on the relation of family histories and public histories. Welzer et al. (2002, 199) described such complementing strategies in the context of family histories that become more vivid and imaginable through the addition of audiovisual media forms such as films. For Cat, (\*1971, Bac Lieu, RVN) whose grandfather used to be a French teacher during colonial times and whose father worked for a U.S. development agency prior to 1975, the data suggests that complementing not only refers to adding visual impressions but also levels different ideological interpretations of the Indochina Wars. The fact that Cat's MCR includes Vietnamese war documentaries that as state productions usually comply with dominant narratives of collective memory in Vietnam signals that she does not avoid these media texts although her Catholic family's portrayal of these time periods is likely to diverge from these representations.

An estimated 800,000 Catholics fled from the communist Viet Minh from North to South Vietnam between 1954 and 1955 (Großheim 2013, 102). Cat told me that her Catholic mother moved from North to the South in 1954 without further detail. Only later in the interview, she hinted at discrepancies between her family's history and public memory (l. 144). This implicitness is possibly a result of the co-presence of some of her employees during the interview at her workplace. Yet, this finding contrasts with the results of other European studies on diverging family and public histories such as Krogsgaard (2017, 374-375) who found that children of Danish Nazis would either avoid or contradict negative public media representations of their parents. In the Vietnamese example, Cat does not refrain from Vietnamese war documentaries that like other Vietnamese state-controlled media used to set colonial and US collaborators like her father and grandfather in a negative light (Großheim 2016, 27; Schwenkel 2010). As one negotiation practice, complementing can therefore add an imaginative or ideological layer to prior collective memories appropriated in the family. In the interview data, complementing often links familial collective memories to public and institutionalized ones.

Discrepancies between familial and public histories can also encourage more investigative ways of engaging with collective pasts and complementing collective memories. In changing media environments and particularly with the advent of the Internet in Vietnam in the early 2000s, the options of finding and accessing such complementing mnemonic content have exponentially grown. Before digitization, content that was only available in print, on tapes or VHS was more difficult to copy, particularly in Vietnam's post-conflict societies of the late 1970s and 1980s. The lack of technologies limited the possible amount of media contacts. In present-day urban life, mnemonic content can be accessed easier, cheaper and is more versatile online as An's account (\*1992, HCMC, SRV) shows.

*A:[...] sometimes I joined a group on Facebook, which is called the old people of Saigon, which is for the people, they posted a lot of photos or stories about Saigon before the war and you know, back then the South Government still in charge. And I love that group because I could see a lot of photo from my city from the past, to know about my city, you know, all the stories, all the people in this, who used to live in the city, what happen in the city.*

*I: Why are you interested in that group or in that topic?*

*A: I'm interested because most of my family are [...] My family was actually [...] my father's family was originally from HN. They came down, my grandfather, my father's father came down to SG in the early year of the war. And he had children, he met my grandmother here and he had all the children in SG and most of my family members used to go to the Southern Government Army, used to serve the army and I'm interested [...]* (An, l. 75-77)

In the closed mnemonic Facebook group "Old people of Saigon" (*Dan Saigon Xua*), group members share pictures and personal photographs of pre-1975 Saigon. A member of the Vietnamese refugee diaspora administers the group. For An, the images he sees in that group represent the Saigon his father always told him about. Although these are digitized historic images or private photographs of people he does not personally know, he assigns personal meaning to them based on previous family talks about life in pre-1975 Saigon. So, it is in this Facebook group that An can visualize familial memories through digital images that do rarely exist in the family as material objects. Neither do they exist in official Vietnamese representations of national history because they depict an urban lifestyle that the communist government used to denounce as infused by "'neo-colonial poisons' (*noc doc thuc dan moi*)" threatening the "revolutionary spirit" (Taylor 2001, 32/76). In An's case, media content is explicitly selected to match and harmonize personal family memories that otherwise find only degrading or no representation in official narratives (Großheim 2010, 2013, 2016). The testimonies of Vietnamese refugees in the Facebook group provide a space in which An's familial narratives find acceptance and solidarity. In this case, we may argue that the family did serve as a "filter" for the selection and reading of mnemonic media texts (Leonhard 2002, 295; Krogsgaard 2017, 374).

In the interview data, complementing also occurs in relation to own family photography. Family photographs serve as visual cues to family histories (Erlil 2011, 160), occasion for remembering (Kuhn 2008, 284), "mnemonic aid" (van Dijck 2007, 100) and gap-fillers for one's own childhood.

*[...]all my childhood memories are so connected to this city. [...] (...) yes, so in the inner city, there is a (...) how do you say yes, at this intersection, there is a (...) how do you say this " Ho con rua" [traffic circle?] yes, this traffic circle, there is a lake, and the lake, such an architecture and so my parents brought me there as a child very OFT and they also took many photos with me there.*

*And so, I think, just before the unification, there was a bomb placed there and oh " Ho con rua" is the name of the turtle lake [oh so] and there is a statue of a very big turtle there. And when the bomb exploded, the statue was completely destroyed. And I couldn't remember, because I was two or three years old, I couldn't remember it, but my parents, they still have a photo of that time, where you can see a turtle before it was destroyed by the bomb. Only the turtle is no longer there and was not restored. (Thuy, I. 81)*

Thuy (\*1972, Saigon, RVN) explained how closely her childhood and family memories are connected to Saigon, later HCMC. Similar as in An's (\*1992, HCMC, SRV) case, the personal family snapshots in Thuy's example serve as "evidence" (Kuhn 2000, 186; 2002, 49) for a bygone time, a lost place and bourgeois lifestyle. The images complement her family stories, her own missing early childhood memories but also the city's history. Commissioned by the Nguyen Van Thieu government and built in 1967, the Turtle Lake (*Ho Con Rua*) belonged to pre-1975 Saigon architecture. While the pond stayed intact, the turtle was destroyed by an allegedly dissident group after unification and never restored (Parker 2014). Political unrest, power struggles and unification in Vietnam did not only lead to economic and social changes, but also to drastic alterations of the urban landscapes, notably in the South. Place, street and institutional names were changed, statues replaced, ARVN cemeteries demolished (Großheim 2016; Vo 2011, 219). Such changes in the urban landscape and lifestyle of former Saigon urged a particular need and interest in complementing mnemonic content.

Complementing, however, does not always visibly relate to public memory and history. Instead, other cases of complementing focus more on people's autobiography and familial memories. I have discussed such cases previously in the context of child photography and family albums that helped e.g. Binh and Trung to make sense of their younger and present selves and of familial stories about their childhood (see 6.2.1.6).

### 6.2.2.2 *Discussing contentious memories*

While complementing is often marked by the similarity of mnemonic content, discussing contentious memories encompasses practices that directly or indirectly **negotiate clashing views about the past**. Contentious memories materialize in the interview data as clashes

between individuals or collective discussions on **sensitive topics of or counter views on public memory** in Vietnam. The latter is more common as only very few respondents openly addressed disputes within the family due to ideological leanings and the countries' past.

Usually, contentious memories are not subject to representations in Vietnamese state media. For that reason, discussing contentious memories usually takes place in either more intimate settings among family members and peers. It thus concerns primarily interpersonal communication. Discussing contested interpretations of collective pasts opens up safe communicative spaces for neglected topics and alternative views about Vietnam's history. Such topics include positive aspects of the RVN or social discrimination, reeducation and flight from Vietnam after the unification. Given the nature of the topics, discussing contentious topics mostly occurs within a familial or peer network of people who lived under or were associated with the former RVN regime. As more than one million Vietnamese left the country in the years following the fall of Saigon (Wolf/Lowman 1990, 103), these networks can naturally be transnational.

Practices of discussing contentious memories occurred more often among respondents interviewed in HCMC. Phu (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV), whose family was separated during the war years and moved to the South when he was 12, reported how encountering and discussing collective memories from former RVN residents' perspectives became an everyday occurrence in his social life:

*But for me it's quite normal, because I'm young, I have many friend, they, their parents is the former government, that's why I feel that is not so special or I don't think so much about. Because, you cannot, prevent the thinking inside, [...] You cannot. But here, the people still forbid some topics. (Phu, l. 248)*

Phu's account illustrates how he appropriated considered sensitive topics about collective pasts while growing up as a teenager in the South, befriending families associated with the former RVN government. Having access to this kind of knowledge about life in the RVN from time witnesses and their descendants was a "normal" part of his childhood and adolescence. He also stated that although there are public constraints on what can be talked about, the exchange of experiences within those intimate circles cannot be prevented through state control.

That is particularly true if such contentious memories are part of a family's history. The escape of family members from the home country presented great ruptures in individual biographies and harmed the unity of the family as one significant cultural value (Jamieson 1995, 24). Such incidences of family rupture, although sensitive regarding official memory

politics, required further explanation among family members as Thuy (\*1972, Saigon, RVN) stated:

*T: yes I think, for a long time, but yes, in the past she always told us how. I did, she told us that they were waiting and stayed on an island in a concentration camp [meaning refugee camp] before they were allowed to go to Germany. All this.*

*I: that means your family, your aunt was also involved differently?*

*T: Yes, my aunt's husband was the director of a big bank of the former government and so he wasn't military, but somehow he had to, he lost a lot after the reunification. There he became somehow, from important person to nothing at all (giggling) and so I think he was dreaming of another life in another country. He somehow didn't see a real future here either. So he somehow thought that people like him, more or less a capitalist, as they say, would not find a job here in a communist country. So the decision to flee from this country (Thuy, l. 83)*

These examples of discussing sensitive or even traumatic memories of social and economic exclusion, fear from discrimination and flight after unification show that these marginalized narratives and counter memories to official public memory prevail in (transnational) family, peer and diasporic networks. Some respondents even stressed that topics such as reeducation and anti-communist critique would be exclusively discussed among family or peers only (e.g. An, l. 165; Dan l. 69). The centrality of family and peer communication in regard to marginalized collective memories was similarly observed in the context of publicly neglected memories of the GDR (Meyen 2013, 225-226). In the Vietnamese context, however, the shifting of discussing contentious memories to (transnational) family, peer and social online communication is further encouraged due to restrictions of freedom of speech in the country (see 4.1.2).

While contentious memories in these first examples presented counter memories to official public memory in Vietnam discussed among like-minded, clashing opinions can also occur between members of the same family. Such diverging interpretations of collective pasts either root in differing life experiences and/or contrasting ideological point of views.

Yen (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV), for example, pointed out in the interview that she does not fully approve of the views on the past in her family. Her family shares a long history of cooperation with Western powers. They had strong ties with the French colonial regime and collaborated with the US military during the 2nd Indochina War. When they tell about their view on Vietnam's history in family conversations, Yen does not agree based on what she learned at school.

*Yea, actually, I have to admit you that my family, my father and my other family, all of them, they come from the, the "nguy", the vietnamese people who work for France or for America so their perception or their memories about the history is all they living a very very bad way and very good life, had very good life with France, the Americans and the war comes, we had to repay too and we lose. Yea, they were in with France and with American so they talked that they were lose but in fact, they win. And they tell that "Oh, we lose so we can't, the life is not good anymore and we*

*cannot live in our desired living standards", yea, they talk like that. But when I learn about the history and I have my own knowledge and perception, it's different, [...]*

*It's different from the Vietnamese real history. And so the thing that the children in my family, we see from the old people, it's different from the general people. (Yen, l. 134-135)*

The discussions on collective pasts in Yen's family illustrate both features of contentious memories: first, they represent two diverging views on the past between individuals of a family and second, the perspective of elder members of her family contradicts official narrations of history as communicated by state institutions.

It is noteworthy that Yen (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV) picked up the notion of "*nguy*" ("puppet") in her own narrative to describe her family. It is a derogative term for former collaborators with the former RVN regimes long used in public media and official historiography (Schwenkel 2010; Großheim 2016). Siding with official views of public memory in Vietnam and using a degrading term for her family, Yen is one of the few informants who breaks with the principle of seniority and filial piety towards the elder in her mnemonic practice. She openly distanced herself from her family's collective memory. Distancing from one's family's history and memories has been researched to be an outcome of other social family struggles in other cultural contexts (Leonhard 2002, 295). The interview data, however, does not reveal any further detail on the actual family interaction. We therefore do not know with certainty whether Yen (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV) actually argues against her family's interpretation of collective pasts or whether her response is led by social desirability.

From the perspective of memory research in post-socialist societies (Huxtable 2017), we may also argue that Yen as a young urban middle-class woman employed in marketing might see no reason in questioning the state's memory politics because it is in fact that very system that granted her upward social mobility. While her parents and grandparents suffered from economic and social losses with the socio-political transitions after unification, she only seems to see the benefits of the regime change ("in fact, they [her family] win" (Yen, l. 134)). In the Russian and Ukrainian contexts, Huxtable (2017, 321) similarly detected differences in judging socialist pasts depending on whether they had benefitted from the collapse of the Soviet Union or not.

Either way, Yen's example illustrates the power hegemonic narratives of collective memory can enfold even in the younger generation. It also reveals the norms Yen adheres to when introducing the history of her country (and family) to a Western woman and thus when representing her nationality in an international context. Yet, the fact that Yen also openly talked about the differing standpoints between the generations in her family and the

deviant views of the elderly compared to official Vietnamese historiography means that she did not completely deny this part of her family history and that she accepts the existence of these views without agreeing on them.

Discussing contentious memories can lead to complementing if the other standpoint or view on collective pasts is accepted and not entirely rejected. In this combination, these practices result in a more pluralistic MCR.

### 6.2.2.3 *Witnessing disputes over contentious memories*

Witnessing disputes over contentious memories describes communicative actions in which respondents **encounter debates over collective pasts without taking an active part in the discussion**. Usually, informants described these encounters as **incidents of irritation**. As these encounters often occur unexpectedly, they usually break with informants' initial motivations and communicative action in that very situation. The original intention often remains vague and intransparent in the interview data.

Nhien (\*1980, Nghe An, SRV) for example did not recall the details on how and where she encountered the online debate on Vietnamese history among *Viet Kieu* and Vietnamese residents.

*N: In Vietnam have some. Also newspaper have write about history. On TV have many programs talk about history. But I think on the Internet have so many kind (?) about Vietnamese people but now they live in abroad. Many people talk about history but I think different. Yeah. Vietnamese people in Vietnam, live in Vietnam talk different Vietnamese people in abroad. So when someone read history, they can confusing about history. Yeah. But to me, I don't say much history so I don't know and I don't care war. I know about history is the thing I have studied in class. Yeah.*

*I: And you said sometimes they talk different. In what way, what is the difference?*

*N: Example about a person like Uncle Ho. Every Vietnamese people live in Vietnamese really admire and love him but having many Vietnamese people but now they living in abroad, they talk different so it makes some people confusing. Yeah. Exactly I don't remember what exactly. I think many things different.*

*I: Where did you see this or where did you read this?*

*N: On the Internet. Yeah.*

*I: Is there a special website? Or where?*

*N: Sometimes I have read on some websites. I don't remember exactly what website. Sometimes I have some discuss between people, between many people so I don't remember exactly. (Nhien, I. 169-175)*

It remains unclear whether Nhien did not want to or actually could not provide any further detail on the particular website or her own intentions on visiting it. Putting oneself in the role of a witness and providing only vague information might have also been a narrative strategy to not lose face while voicing the socially unacceptable — criticizing Ho Chi Minh.

Born in Ho's home province Nghe An, it must have appeared even more inappropriate and unexpected to her that he has critics. Although Nhien (\*1980, Nghe An, SRV) did not explicate her initial intentions of visiting the website, she acknowledged that there are diverging views on 20th century Vietnamese history and its revolutionary heroes. She realized that these deviant views were held by a particular group that she generally described as "Vietnamese living abroad".

Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) made similar observations on disputes over discrepancies in memories and opinions between "people in the North" and "people in the South" while surfing Internet forums such as vnsharing and vozforums.com (Hai, l. 81). Observing disputes and deviant collective memories can thus lead to the realization of demarcations of other social groups through communicating memories (Halbwachs 2008, 40).

Nhien's remarks also exemplify that she prescribes this contentious character of collective memories to online communication as opposed to Vietnamese mass media and school education that she did not question in her account. That signals that she attributes more credibility to mass and educational media than online media. This observation corresponds to other repertoire- and media-use-oriented studies on memory that found that the assigned credibility towards a certain media technology or content is decisive for appropriating collective memory (Finger 2017, 162).

One of the respondents, Dinh (\*1988, Hanoi, SRV), who moved to HCMC with his family as a child in 1994, witnessed in the interaction with classmates at school that he was treated differently. Similarly to Hai, he noted that some people in the South are antagonistic towards Hanoians, including himself.

*The one thing I remember that when I was in primary school, because I come from Hanoi, so I, my friend live in the South Vietnam, so for people in the South Vietnam, sometimes they have the dislike people from Hanoi. So, yeah, so many friend, I think just joke, they joke, many friends of mine tell me that you from Hanoi and they sing a song to, to mock at me, mock [...]* (Dinh, l. 18)

Although Dinh did not mention a specific reason for being mocked in primary school, his general statement on resentments of "people in the South of Vietnam [...] dislik[ing] people from Hanoi" yet hinted at a more general observation of social antagonisms beyond his own experience. Such social cleavages can be considered as legacies of years of separation, civil war and socialist restructuring of the South under the rule of the government in Hanoi.

All of the examples of witnessing contentious memories provoked respondents' reflection and irritation on a past not lived. Observing social interactions in which people disagree about collective pasts or are treated differently can make people realize the plurality of

collective memory. In this regard, practices of witnessing can similarly lead to complementing.

The topics of debates, however, do not always refer to social division concerning civil war and unification, but also revolve around what is considered cultural heritage in different generational groups (see Duy, l. 14) or what is internationally expected to be known about Vietnamese national history (see Van, l. 44). On these topics, witnessing occurs across generational groups, gender, regions and national borders.

#### *6.2.2.4 Avoiding talks and disputes over contentious memories*

Negotiating contentious memories also means to avoid communicating about collective pasts or certain aspects of it. Avoiding practices serve the purpose to **harmonize existing social relations by preventing a clash of opinions or keeping secrets about the past**. Through avoiding, the contentious character of specific memories, including their political or traumatic implications, becomes intentionally concealed. Avoiding therefore includes pre-dominantly conversational strategies of depoliticizing, omitting and remaining silent. In this regard, practices of avoiding reveal important insights on collective forgetting (Connerton 2008). Usually, these practices affect forms of (mediated) interpersonal communication in informants' MCRs, particularly family and peer communication.

Political implications of collective memories can state the actual matter of controversy and reason for avoiding communication. In Vietnam, such political controversies mainly revolve around the support of communism and the CPV in the past and present. Diverging political sentiments about communism not only occur between those who grew up in the DRV and RVN separately but also within the same family.

Kim from Vinh (\*1978, SRV) recalled some family disputes with her parents who strongly believe in communism and still worship Ho Chi Minh as a heroic leader. Eventually, she would stop arguing over political ideologies with them.

*My father and my mother I think they believed a lot. In my mother's house, she make an altar of Ho Chi Minh for pray. But I think they are, they have a different mind, state of mind. But I respect that. When I was younger I criticize (kichern) them very much. I think you are wrong, You believe in anything, but after that I understand they live in another period, another history and they could have their belief. But I don't agree with that. So I don't have any. I feel poor for the people (giggling). (Kim, l. 75)*

Western-educated Kim (\*1978, Vinh, SRV) later in life started to acknowledge her parents' life experiences, upbringing and thus collective memories under communism. As she could not change their minds, she stopped engaging in familial debates about the political implications of her parents' mnemonic practices. By avoiding the discussion, she respects

the seniority, moral debt and collective memories of the elder, securing familial harmony despite disagreements.

Another example is Giang's (\*1952, Tien Giang, SVN) dispute with her emigrated sister about her past political involvement. While Giang joined a communist youth group as a political arm of the Communist Party while growing up in the RVN and actively supported the communist cause in the South, her sister left the country for the United States after unification. They are still in touch regularly, but they avoid addressing political topics to sustain their sisterhood and the harmony of transnational family relations.

*In some families, if they are in two sides in the family especially on both the South and North, if their family was divided into two sides, the conflict is very strong even with my sister living in US now. When she wants to criticize something about the government, about the Communist Party, she did not tell me. She did not talk about it with me. Because she does not feel confident because in her feelings, in her perception, I belong to the government in the past. I belong to Communist Party in the past. I supported to them. I can (?) to protect them. She say many things to other sisters but she did not tell me. I mean that inside a family, there were two sides of political side. Right or left or neutral. If they say a lot, if they remind it a lot, the fighting, the argument, the quarrel would happen. (Giang, l. 158)*

Giang's (\*1952, Tien Giang, SVN) example illustrates that splits and contentious memories of civil war in Vietnam do not necessarily follow geographical lines, but can occur even within the same family (see also Tai 2001b, 14) and can persist even after more than 40 years of unification. The fact that the two sisters still stay in touch despite these contentious memories and contradicting political leanings shows that they prioritize their sisterhood over their individual beliefs and experiences with communism. They can maintain their relationship transnationally via media technologies and by depoliticizing their family conversations about the past.

Both examples illustrated that familial values and obligations outweighed political opinions about contentious memories and that depoliticizing private disputes assisted to hold the social group, in these cases the family unit, together and respect diverging memories and life experiences.

Another conversational strategy of avoiding are communicative acts that deliberately leave out or omit certain information to make collective memories appear less contentious or to keep one's face and respect the social hierarchy of the family.

Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) for example, part of whose family escaped from Vietnam and migrated to Germany, reported that his parents are quite selective about what they reveal about the times of civil war.

*Yeah. My parents also do that too. Maybe like some days that if they become easy and they want something to talk and he ask. In some case, it not every time I ask, they answer. This is some stupid things in the past and we had to. We cannot change it. It has to do that like. For example like some people in the North, people in the South, in Sai Gon or something, they still hate people*

*in the North. Everything has a reason. But we just know that the reason/ why maybe people know the reason, but they don't say about that. We have to keep that like something. (Hai, l. 203)*

Hai's account implicates that he can only ask his parents about difficult questions about the past when they are in an "easy" mood and ready to talk. To approach elder family members about difficult pasts thus requires a specific situational context in which they feel comfortable to talk. Moreover, the emotions and actions of the elderly in the past need to be respected. Hai hinted at the fact that his parents do not approve of some of their former actions anymore. The parental role often encourages omitting of past failures as it misfits the moral role model function senior family members have.

When asking his parents about resentments of Saigonese towards "people in the North", they only vaguely responded that there is "a reason", but did not explicate on it. *Hieu* or filial piety also means to respect the elders' wish not to talk and remain silent about uncomfortable collective pasts.

This principle can be similarly observed in the interview data in the context of traumatic memories. Traumatic memories are avoided not because they may lead to disputes but because they represent an emotional burden that might be harmful to revive.

*Well, actually I wouldn't get told anything about the past or about the fights from my grandparents or parents, because this time is very unpleasant when we remember, especially for my grandma and grandpa. They have to hide or flee from bombs and they don't want to think about the bad memories. (Quynh, l. 95)*

Quynh (\*1992, Hanoi, SRV) found wartime experiences of the past too sensitive of a topic to talk about with her grandparents. Raising such issues in intergenerational talks would put them in an uncomfortable position. Avoiding practices are therefore brought forth in adherence to the social norms that ensure respectful behavior among family members. Avoiding in this sense, however, can also contribute to the silencing and thus collective forgetting of hurtful and negative events. It is therefore not only remembering as such and the shared knowledge about the past that constitutes family, but also the rules of communicating memories and collective forgetting among its members (Keppler 1994, 2001) — something Ryan (2010, 156) called "mnemonic socialization".

The interview data shows that avoiding practices are carried out predominantly within family communication but in a few cases also in peer communication (e.g. Giang).

### 6.2.3 Practices of contestation

A third and last type of MCPs are practices of contestation. These practices aim at countering a particular interpretation of collective pasts. Contesting addresses oppositional

understandings of (Ryan 2010, 154) and subversive practices towards dominant public memory (see 4.2.1). Practices of contestation comprise what in memory studies is often generally referred to as "counter-memory" (Foucault 1996, 160). While Foucault (ibid.) regards counter-memory primarily as "oppos[ing] history as knowledge", practices of contestation deal more broadly with hegemonic forms of public memory in the sense of Bodnar (1992).

In authoritarian governed societies, such subversive practices and readings can be particularly subtle (Reifová 2015; Bardan 2017). Not every respondent in Vietnam articulated his or her oppositional or critical views explicitly. Instead, voiced indifference and disinterest towards dominant mnemonic narratives can also indicate more subtle ways of contesting. Since dominant narratives are not solely represented in the state-controlled mass media but also appropriated by people, contesting can occur across forms of mnemonic communication, including mass-mediated, face-to-face and mediated interpersonal variants.

Based on interview data from Vietnam, the following sub-types of contesting can be discerned: rejections of ideological mnemonic content, researching and spreading suppressed memories and criticizing communism in communicating memories.

### 6.2.3.1 *Rejecting ideological mnemonic content*

Rejecting practices include non-use or communicative acts that result in **discarding ideological mnemonic content**. Rejecting either requires that people have priorly engaged with particular mnemonic narratives and content or that they hold an oppositional opinion towards the source of consideration. In the context of this study rejecting occurs only in reference to mass-mediated communication.

In the interview data, informants mostly name the disagreement with the political or ideological nature of the content or their saturation and boredom with it as explicit reasons for rejecting it. Rejecting does not always concern the entire content but in some cases only aspects of it.

Vinh (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV), for example, explained how he was curious about the musical elements of the music show *Giai Dieu Tu Hao* when first turning to it.

*yes yes I have seen once. I looked for another reason: for the music. They said that they make different arrangements and harmony for these old songs and I don't see that for political reasons or nostalgia, but I looked just for the music? But I don't think much of the show [yes], both music and politics or so. for me, it is progaganda. (Vinh, l. 82)*

Vinh's initial interest in the television show was its artistic aspects led by his passion for music. He denied any nostalgic or political motivations in turning to the show that hails predominantly revolutionary music (*nhac do*). Eventually, it was both music and the conveyed political message of the show that did not convince Vinh. He criticized and degraded it as "propaganda".

Trung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) expressed an even stronger alienation with that state's and public media's memory discourse.

*[...] Like Vietnam country right now that we always this is one of the reasons that I don't like the communist because they always try to remember, "Oh we won we won the France and we won USA that time" but it's really, you know, nonsense and I what we need to do right now is to forget everything about the past forget everything about we did [...]* (Trung, l. 358)

Trung's objection towards the monolithic representation of collective memory in state media and memory politics in Vietnam even led to an aversion towards the CPV. Denouncing dominant mnemonic narratives of "victory" over "foreign aggressors" (Taylor 2001, 29) as "nonsense" demonstrates that Trung does not assign any credibility or sincerity to this mnemonic content. The young student's criticism goes as far as rejecting Vietnam's wartime past altogether, advocating collective forgetting.

Besides rejecting mnemonic content for its propagandistic features, several respondents complained about the repetitive nature and their boredom, especially with anniversary content.

*[laughing] I never be good about history. I give up. Because like the special day come nearly, all the newspaper, television, they start blah blah blah the day, next day is the day. Blah blah blah. One thing you watch every year, you feel that's not important so you forget about that.* (Hai, l. 107)

*recently is the, the event that we have the exhibition to remember, yeah for Hanoi's 60 years of revolution in the national museum, in Hanoi museum and there's a lot of photo from 1954 [...]* Some student they come to get the, some document or document for their study and some old people but just few people coming there I must confess. And I, frankly I didn't find interesting because they have the same thing, like other exhibition, they have photo they hang on that, they have some (? – 59:54), they have some state on the wall, you know and they, they not interested and, not as interesting as other event just like the concert, the music concert with a lot of music star and that's [...] but the news of the exhibition, I don't see much image. There's a very boring speech of the leader with the phrase and sentences I can easily to find on other event, like, I don't find it interesting. (Phuc, l. 172-182)

Both, Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) and Phuc (\*1989, Phu Tho, SRV) voiced their saturation with anniversary coverage on historical events. Anniversaries of historical events such as the victorious battle against French colonial troops at Dien Bien Phu are always a welcome occasion for the state in Vietnam to remind its people of the past achievements of the CPV through wide news coverage (Sanko 2016b), public displays and special exhibitions. The reactions by Hai and Phuc reflect their perceived monotony of these historic and commemorative content. Phuc's contrast of the exhibition with a music concert does not

only demonstrate different personal interests but also indicates the felt discrepancy between a hailed revolutionary past and his own post-reform urban lifeworld. It is noteworthy that these saturation effects largely surface among younger informants in Vietnam.

Rejecting particular mnemonic content can lead to a categorical refusal and eventual elimination of such MCR components. In this way, rejecting if occurring as a pattern across segments of the population drives collective forgetting despite or just because of the omnipresence of monolithic mnemonic narratives and representations.

### 6.2.3.2 *Appropriating and sharing alternate or suppressed memories*

Practices of appropriating and sharing alternate and suppressed memories concentrate on **researching, consuming and spreading knowledge about the past that is not represented in hegemonic narratives and content of state institutions.** The motivation behind these practices originate from personal interest or dissatisfaction with mainstream collective memory. In more exceptional cases, these practices can be activist and politically driven.

Phu's (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) interest in alternative views on collective memory derives from his family's history of separation, his coming-of-age experience as a Hanoian living in the South, his ties to the American-Vietnamese diaspora and a cosmopolitan lifestyle that allowed him to live and work abroad. Yet, Phu described his interest in these alternative media without referring to a political cause.

*Ah, in the past, actually if i want to find a, an official story or history, we have to find in Internet or we also can find in some old books, but i think is not so much. Here, in the South, many books in the South, had been destroyed. The Northern don't like the existence of the book. Normally, I find the information on the Internet. (Phu, l. 224)*

*But it's not so, not so, (...)what to say? It's not so against to the government [books on the Vietnamese blackmarket]. They said that. Some book they, for example, they printed in the "USA" or in ah. They told too much about untold stories – cannot sell here. (Phu, l. 246)*

Phu named three major alternate sources that he consults for a more balanced view on Vietnamese history: the Internet, books on the Vietnamese blackmarket and diasporic literature published abroad only. Another alternative source, the book collection of his French-colonial educated grandfather, got lost when communist forces burned his literary belongings after the fall of Saigon in 1975. The burning of Western books and RVN literature has been only one measure besides the confiscation of tapes, records and bans on music as part of a campaign to eradicate "cultural vestiges" of the former Republic in the South after unification (Taylor 2001, 39). The fact that these harmful and marginalized

aspects of socialist transition in the South prevail in Phu's MCR and vernacular memory (Bodnar 1992, 14) despite his parents' revolutionary involvement shows that his grandfather's testimony is actually another alternate source besides the three he already named. Apart from (diasporic) literature and familial talks, "the Internet" remains an only vaguely elaborated source. The interview data across cases indicates that these vague notions of Internet use are more often linked to the use of search engines instead of the regular visit of particular Websites or SNS.

While Phu (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) had a primarily personal interest, Kim (\*1979, Vinh, SRV) considered herself an activist. As she explained, her intellectual and political engagements drive her research and distribution of alternate knowledge in Vietnam and abroad.

*Yes, there are some older book, for example, the book of some writer who wrote them. But it was by under censor, censored by the government but it's still go around and we could buy and we could photo, buy photo. We have some photocopies and we, we distributed between friends, between relatives and like that. So I've read this. (Kim, l. 27)*

In her account, Kim elaborated on her activist practices regarding accessing and circulating publications from the Vietnamese diaspora or those in exile (e.g. Pham Thi Hoai, Dung Thu Huong) or considered world literature such as George Orwell's *1984*. Kim's practice of contesting mainstream public memory goes beyond the mere consumption of alternative or censored media as described in Phu's case. It involves the additional duplicating and sharing of marginalized mnemonic narratives and literary works as a political cause for change. This activist form of practices of contestation, however, is least common among practices that construct counter memories in the empirical data.

In order to appropriate alternate knowledge about the past, both Kim and Phu circumvented the state's censorship. Phu's report noted that on Vietnam's black market, this is a two-way road. Censorship of book copies is skirted by sellers and consumers alike. It reflects the demand for information about the past beyond the mainstream.

Both Kim and Phuc also used online communication for appropriating alternate views about the past. Despite the tightening of Internet laws in recent years (Kurfürst 2015; epd 2018; Reuters 21.4.2020), online communication is hard to be fully regulated. It eases transnational communication that is of great importance in engaging with collective pasts beyond the memory politics agenda of the Vietnamese state.

Social media such as blogs and Facebook still provide spaces and sources for counter memories. "The old people of Saigon" (*Dan Saigon Xua*) represented one example in the empirical data of such an online space that provides views, experiences and exchange on pre-1975 Saigon, including nostalgic accounts about life in the RVN. Joining closed

mnemonic groups on SNS is therefore another way of circumventing censorship and learning about alternate views about the past.

The appropriation of alternate sources, however, is not a new practice that came about with digitization. Hop (\*1959, Ninh Binh, DRV) recalled that secret listening to radio broadcasts of "the enemy" (*Voice of America* (VOA), BBC, *Voice of Saigon*) was a common practice in the DRV during times of separation and war.

*At that time, radio was forbidden to listen to the radio of VOA, BBC or Sai Gon Voice - The Voice of Sai Gon in Vietnamese but my relatives say we should listen very quietly, not so loud, because it is dangerous to control if you discover that you hear the [smile] But I was interested. I need to know the other media not only about our time but other time say then every day. e.g. 30 minutes for BBC I have heard when I was a child, I have heard with others and VOA - The Voice of American also, then you have already from 6 o'clock to 6:30 is BBC. (Hop, l. 54)*

The same clandestine media practices existed in reversed manner in the RVN as Giang (\*1952, Tien Giang, SVN) recalled.

*And my mother one time she was scared. She did not have enough time to switch off. She used a big blanket to cover the radio but with the sound, the blanket is nothing. Soldiers laugh, laugh, laugh: "You try to hide me. You try not to let me hear but I hear all." [LAUGHING]. "You will get problems". And the soldiers laughed: " With blanket you can't keep it secret, you can't hide. You are listen to Hanoi radio." (Giang, l. 48)*

This long-term perspective on practices of contestation underscores previous historical media research in Western contexts that people in restrictive or oppressive media regimes yet turn to other, even forbidden media content (Averbeck-Lietz 2014, 417). The interview data from Vietnam adds that this is not only the case for news and current entertainment but also for mnemonic accounts.

The authoritarian nature of government rule over historiography, educational institutions and mass media as dominant memory agents is undermined by those informants who take an active personal and political interest in their own, their family's and the country's past. Liberations from the grip of censorship have always existed offline and online. Today, these ways coexist and complement each other.

### 6.2.3.3 Criticizing communism

A final practice of contestation found in the empirical data is the practice of criticizing communism. The practice comprises communicative acts that **disapprove of communism as a political ideology and party politics of the CPV in past and present**. Since openly criticizing communism can have serious legal consequences and many of the interviews were conducted in public spaces, it is only natural that this practice occurred only rarely in the empirical data.

Even among those, who revealed their critical practice, hesitation and giggling were common indicators for discomfort for speaking out. Dan (\*1954, Binh Thuan, SVN) who experienced social and economic discrimination due to his family records after 1975 shared how he would make fun of communists together with his friends.

*D: because maybe somewhat dangerous here. But what we see, what we hear, you can keep inside, keep silent, you can talk only with close friends with the same opinion. [...] I was banned by the government to work any government, any position.*

*I: what topics do you talk about?*

*D: only some humor stories about communists (laughing). (Dan, l. 69-71)*

In Dan's example, humor seems to be a more subtle, a more legitimate form of critique to articulate in a public and vulnerable interview setting. In this sequence of the interview, Dan reported about his caution to talk about certain memories in public. He only shares memories critical of communism within an intimate circle of friends. Asking about what topics they care about and share within the group of friends, Dan said they would only tell each other fun stories about communism. His relativization of the practice of ridiculing by the word "only" (l. 71) mitigates the value of the action and thus the critical stance behind the action. At the same time, this humorous approach to memory can also be regarded as a coping strategy with difficult or even traumatic memories of his life in the course of the socialist transition in the South.

The experience of having lived and worked in the RVN is also the point of departure of Hung's (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) critical practice.

*Life and the government in the RVN, the former Republic of Vietnam. for example, at that time, teachers worked much more like teachers. Let me give you an example. Many teachers they do this: you teach at school, yeah and then you have a private course at home. and you ask your students to come your house to study there. and when you give a test, a semester-test or end-of-the-year test, the questions are the ones that have already been done at home. they make money from that. this is very bad. So yeah, we compare the two systems of education and we saw that the former education was better. (Hung, l. 117)*

Similar to Dan, Hung's critical views on communist education politics are restricted to the realm of like-minded peers. Hung, who had worked for the RVN regime before unification and had studied abroad during the war years never emigrated. He did not reveal whether and how his previous occupations in the RVN had consequences for him and his family under communism, but it is noteworthy that he chose a rather mild example of criticism to illustrate his practice.

An (\*1992, HCMC, SRV) on the other hand, had been somewhat more open, revealing that he and his parents share the same opinion when they told him about their treatment by communists after unification.

*There are not a story that they wouldn't share with me but they would rather tell me those stories in private rather than, you know, out loud so everybody can hear. So they don't really have conflict in telling those stories, they share the same opinions, the same thought, so was pretty easy to tell me everything. Especially they always say, they talk about the Communist Party, how they get in trouble. (An, l. 165)*

An's father served in the ARVN. He was reported for reeducation and imprisoned. His later accusation of the CPV lying about history (l. 169) hints at the critical nature An's family talk probably has as well but would not explicitly share with me at the café.

The examples show that alternate or critical views on historical or past events or the CPV can only exist in limited, protected spaces. These can be private realms among trusted people, one-on-one online communication or digital spaces that are either closed or anonymous. It is noteworthy that informants in HCMC were generally more prone to critical practices. In the examples discussed that was mainly due to negative life experiences that were communicated and perpetuated to respondents or experienced by themselves.

For practices of contestation, we can also see stronger involvement from respondents interviewed in HCMC. However, their contesting stance cannot be referred back to location alone, as many HCMC residents also grew up in northern or central provinces of Vietnam. In these cases, their practices of contestation are rather explained by the level of education, their interest in historical and political topics and access to pluralistic views either through family relations, educational relations or relations abroad.

### **6.3 Interim summary II: Communicating memories empirically grasped**

Studying the social phenomenon of communicating memories by means of a modified repertoire approach (see 2.3) allowed to provide a systematic overview of forms and practices of mnemonic communication. These forms and practices comprised in people's MCRs map empirically people's various ways of engaging with collective pasts over time. While the MCRs were reconstructed based on interview data from Vietnam, their level of abstraction allows for application in and comparison with other cultural settings.

The data revealed five different **forms** of (1) face-to-face, five forms of (2) mass-mediated and two forms of (3) mediated interpersonal communication that people use to engage with the past in the everyday (see Tab. 4).

forms of com. memories	subforms	contexts
face-to-face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• family talk</li> <li>• expert talk</li> <li>• peer conversations</li> <li>• mnemonic interest group talk</li> <li>• intercultural conversations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• professional</li> <li>• educational</li> <li>• peer</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>
mass-mediated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vietnamese state media</li> <li>• historical books/literature</li> <li>• folk/popular music</li> <li>• media at exhibitions/memorials</li> <li>• inter-/transnational media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• professional</li> <li>• educational</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>
mediated interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal photography</li> <li>• (transnational) social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• peer</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>

Table 4: Overview of forms and contexts of communicating memories (MCR components)

(1) In **face-to-face encounters**, familial conversations featured most prominently, particularly those during meals, familial rites and trips. Besides familial conversations, conversations with various experts, including teachers and time witnesses and with peers appeared to be significant face-to-face encounters about the past. The norms of communicating memories within these settings were strongly led by social hierarchies. Familial and expert conversations about the past are thus often hierarchical and asynchronous. Elderly and experts usually initiate take the lead in setting the agenda for mnemonic talks. The social role of a child, younger family member or student requires adhering to the principles of filial piety (*hiên*) and moral debt (*ơn*) in communicating memories.

(2) **Mass-mediated encounters** with collective pasts in Vietnam occurred primarily in the forms of appropriating historical Vietnamese state media, history books and music. Personal interest or relevance, credibility, production quality and aesthetics and time resources are decisive criteria for people today to turn voluntarily to mass-mediated mnemonic content in the everyday. In educational settings, individuals' preoccupations with e.g. historical textbooks have not always been fully voluntary but done as fulfillment for necessary credit at school or university. Notably, audiovisual and auditive standardized media can leave informants with strong sensory and emotional impressions about past times, including times not lived.

(3) Communicating memories through **mediated interpersonal communication** mainly occurs through family photography and social media communication. Home-mode amateur photography and the existence of photographic records of the past depends on

whether a family could afford media technologies during wartimes or postwar years. Home videos do not play a role in communicating memories in Vietnam. With socio-economic reforms in the second half of the 1980s and the advent of the Internet in Vietnam in the early 2000s, preconditions for mediated interpersonal communication improved. Facebook is the most popular SNS for communicating memories. Transnational online communication, however, still relies heavily on kinship and friendship relations despite its potentially great outreach and variations of usability.

We have seen that face-to-face and mass-mediated forms represent the most relevant and most diversified encounters with the past in Vietnamese urbanites' lifeworlds, particularly in familial, peer, educational and professional contexts. The constellations of these components of MCRs largely depend on the availability of certain media technologies, thematic preferences, obligation and ideological attitudes that evolved throughout each respondent's socialization.

The meaning of these various forms of engagement with collective pasts was further explored by investigating how they are brought into practice in the everyday. Based on the empirical data, I discerned three main types of **mnemonic communication practices** that occur across the three forms of communicating memories: (1) practices of acquirement, (2) practices of negotiation and (3) practices of contestation (see Tab. 5). The typology addresses questions of power in communicating memories, as the single practices reveal how people deal with hegemonial or contentious mnemonic narratives and content.

practices of com. memories	subforms	contexts
practices of acquirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• informing</li> <li>• moral educating</li> <li>• entertaining</li> <li>• commemorating</li> <li>• sharing</li> <li>• creating and archiving</li> <li>• participating in institutionalized memory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• professional</li> <li>• educational</li> <li>• peer</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>
practices of negotiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complementing</li> <li>• discussing contentious memories</li> <li>• witnessing disputes over contentious memories</li> <li>• avoiding talks and disputes over contentious memories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• peer</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>
practices of contestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rejecting ideological mnemonic content</li> <li>• appropriating and sharing alternate/suppressed memories</li> <li>• criticizing communism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• familial</li> <li>• peer</li> <li>• leisure</li> </ul>

Table 5: Overview of practices and contexts of mnemonic communication (MCPs)

(1) **Practices of acquirement** encompass various communicative actions through which respondents have encountered, accepted and internalized communicated content and narratives about the past. Practices of acquirement are based on people's subjective motivations and gratifications in engaging with collective pasts. Prime practices include informing about the past, commemorating the past, moral educating and entertaining through the past. In familial and educational contexts, informing and moral educating are particularly hierarchical. Together with commemorating, they are strongly affected by the Confucian values of filial piety (*hiên*) and moral debt (*ôn*). Practices of acquirement illustrated the close entanglement of autobiographic experience, personal (familial) memories, national history and memory politics in everyday contexts.

(2) **Practices of negotiation** include communicative acts that compare various versions of communicated content and narratives about collective pasts. Practices of negotiation underline the complementing function of different forms of communicating memories (MCR components) not only in content but through sensory or emotional impressions. Practices of negotiation reveal that in particular social spaces disagreements over collective pasts or discussions over contentious memories, e.g. reeducation and escape from Vietnam, exist and are articulated despite an allegedly monolithic public memory in Vietnam. Social hierarchies and the intimacy of relations are decisive on whether contentious memories are discussed or avoided. Particularly avoiding practices contribute to understand phenomena of collective forgetting.

(3) **Practices of contestation** address subversive practices that stand against hegemonic content and narratives of collective memory in Vietnam. Particularly in non-democratic environments as in Vietnam, practices of contestation can be more subtle and expressed through indifference towards and rejection of dominant mnemonic narratives and content. In many cases, people need to circumvent state censorship. Their degree of political motivation varies, however. Explicit anti-communist practices are rare but exist, particularly among those who lived or collaborated with the former RVN regimes. Critical views are only shared with like-minded or within intimate circles.

Sub-practices within this three-fold typology can overlap in natural settings. They are related to each other. They can proceed, follow or add to each other (Fig. 6).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A simple arrow signals the sequence of one practice following another. A bidirectional arrow marks mutual adding of practices to each other.

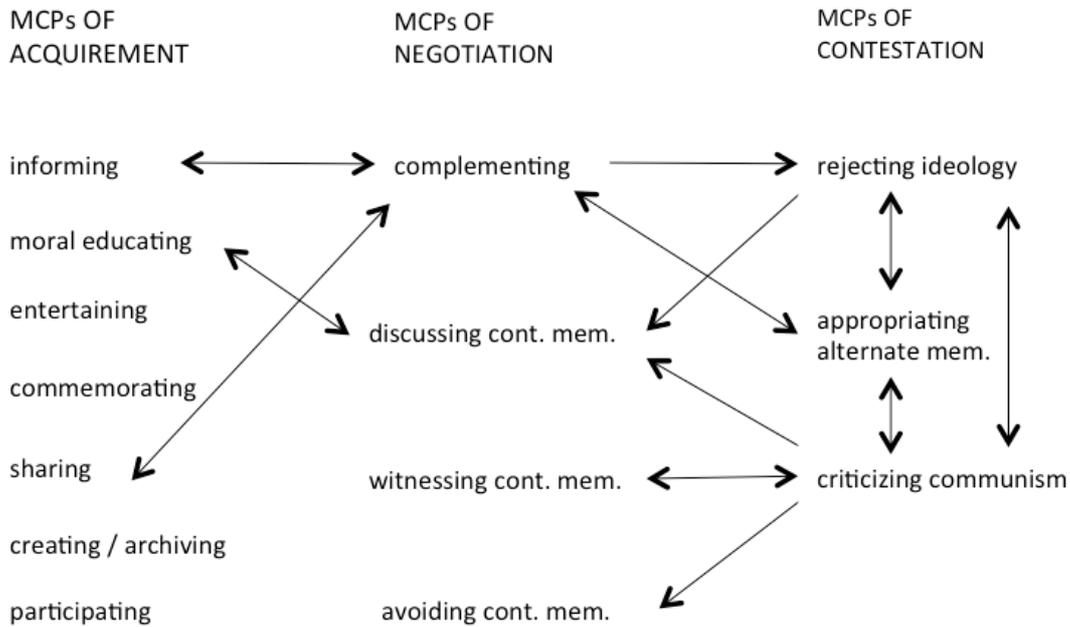


Fig. 6: Relations of MCPs

## 7 Discussion: Making sense of communicating memories

We have seen in the previous findings chapter how the social phenomenon of communicating memories can be grasped empirically by applying a modified repertoire approach to reconstruct people's various ways of engaging with collective pasts in the everyday. After having empirically systematized forms and practices of communicating memories in urban Vietnam (RQ1.1, 1.2), the following discussion section addresses research questions RQ1.3 on generational and socialization patterns as well as RQ2 on the meaning of MCRs in people's lifeworlds, specifically their social relations.

The following chapters deepen the interpretation and further theorize the main findings. The discussion thereby ties into existing academic discourses in the interdisciplinary field of memory studies and explores how empirical findings of this case study contribute to wider epistemological questions such as (1) how to make sense of socialization and social bonds, (2) of ethics and moral responsibility and (3) of civic participation through communicating memories. The discussion section thus elaborates on people's subjective meaning-making

processes through mnemonic communication against the background of wider societal issues.

## **7.1 Making sense of socialization and social bonds**

How do we make sense of socialization backgrounds and social bonds through communicating memories? Various memory researchers have emphasized the social significance of collective memory for its socially cohesive forces. It has been considered the glue or cement between members of a social unit (e.g. Assmann 2008; Leonhard 2014; Simko 2016).

The systematization of forms and practices of communicating memories already indicated that certain motivations and norms of communicating memories can be partially explained by past socialization experiences, e.g. postwar scarcity or particular social roles in group contexts such as the family.

The following chapter therefore scrutinizes and compares socialization and generational aspects within the empirical data in particular in order to examine to what extent they actually account for social similarities and differences, when communicating memories (RQ1.3). In a next step, the chapter discusses particular forms of social group communication (family, peer, mnemonic group) to further theorize on the nature of their social bonds through communicating memories (RQ2).

In the following chapter, I will further develop the argument that people's communicating of collective memories in the everyday depends on four main aspects. These are first and foremost social hierarchies and openness of communication within the family; second, personal biographies and socio-political socialization; third, personal thematic interest; and fourth, changing media environments.

### **7.1.1 Generational aspects within MCRs**

In media and memory studies, researchers utilized the Mannheimian concept of "generation" to explain similarities between individuals of the same age and a common socio-historical location. Scholars assume that people who are endowed with a similar range of shared experience through social and political events during their formative years, share a common (historical) consciousness (Wangler 2012, 59) and "we-sense" (Bolin 2017, 9). In media research in particular, this common socio-historical location is seen in common media socializations (ibid.; Hepp et al. 2014; Volkmer 2006a). The sample of this case study allows for both perspectives to be scrutinized (Fig. 7).

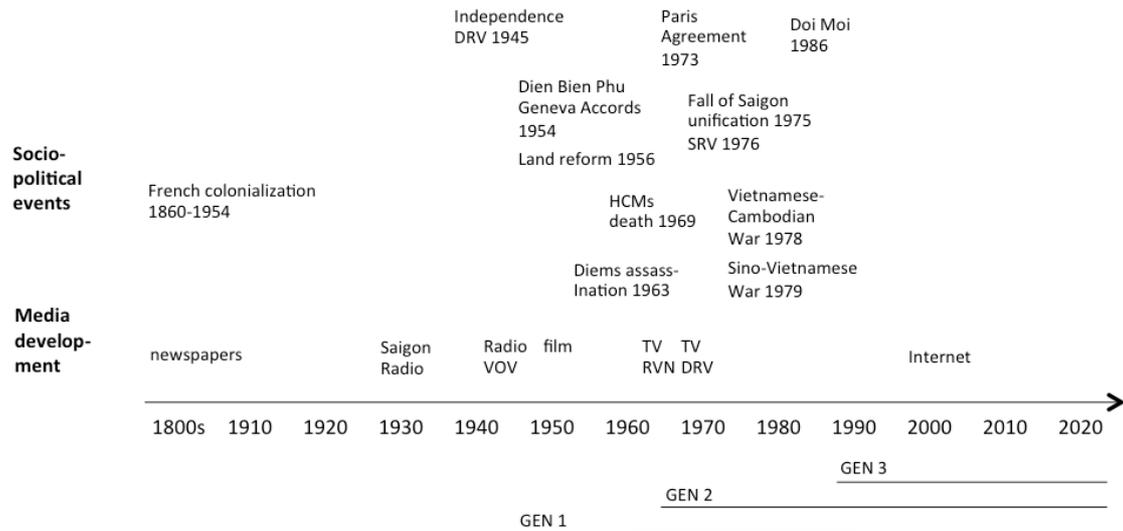


Fig. 7: Generations against the background of socio-political events and media development in Vietnam

#### 7.1.1.1 Media generations and socialization

Bolin (2017, 10) argues that the appropriation of particular media technologies, media personalities, objects or music rooted during one's formative years brings forth generational media experience. With regard to media technologies, Volkmer (2006c, 14) discerns between the radio (those born in the 1920s), the television (those born in the 1950s) and the Internet generation (those born in the 1980s).

The same classification of generational groups on the basis of media socialization during formative years cannot apply in the Vietnamese case as media development in Vietnam was delayed and interrupted due to raging wars. The media biographies of Vietnamese informants further indicate that the adoption of media technologies into respondents' household occurred later than in Volkmer's (2006c, 14) classification and highly depended on the social status of the family and place of residence (rural vs. urban, DRV vs. RVN).

In terms of **media technologies**, the eldest informants with their formative years in the 1950s and 1960s largely grew up with radio if using media technologies at all. In the DRV, the reach of radio broadcasts was further increased via a mainly urban megaphone network or collective listening. Newspapers remained a scarce good during the time of the First Indochina War (Panol/Do 2000, 466-470). Depending on whether they grew up in the DRV or RVN, respondents of the case study would recall different titles and technology brands of their devices.

Although television broadcasts began to be aired in 1966 in the RVN and 1970 in the DRV (ibid., 471), it was not until 1991 when nationwide TV established and became a popular medium (Nguyen-Thu 2019, 2). It is therefore only the second age cohort born in the

1970s that first encountered television during their formative years. Many informants recalled that the technology was still quite scarce, broadcasts in black-and-white and that they usually watched collectively in large groups of several families.

*In the past, I was born in 70s. At 70s in Vietnam, I was born before we got union so when I grow up, we already union but is still in process of recover from the war. At that time, we don't have Internet. We don't have television. Actually we had but very, very few family I know they had television. (Nguyen, l. 37)*

*The TV, about the year, I remember in the year 1982 and very seldom, TV private in the family, you know and the same time have only the TV black and white only you know,...] But in the country not so many and maybe very few house have the TV. And I remember before my father have one TV and when the evening so many people come my home and watching TV. (Nghia, l. 74)*

The youngest age cohort in the case study was born in the 1990s. For them, growing up with television was self-evident. Their formative years were largely affected by the advent of the Internet in Vietnam. Respondents particularly recalled the high costs in the beginning and their activities of downloading music, mangas, playing online games, researching for school or chatting, particularly in one of the many Internet cafés at the time.

*the first time, I am in a Internet shop, I didn't have the computer so I just come there because my friend bring me there because she... her family, I think her family is rich that time so she always chat to her friend and one time she bring me there to chat [...]. (Mai, l. 142)*

*That is in, when I study 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school. At that time they use the very low speed connection, I remember it's about 64kb per second and we need to rent a computer in order to connect to the Internet, it took about 10,000VND to connect to the Internet. At that time it just took about 3,000VND for playing, play game, video game, but 10,000 for connect the Internet, 3 time more expensive [...]. (Dinh, l. 124)*

Mai (\*1990, Thai Nguyen, SRV) and Dinh's (\*1988, Hanoi, SRV) accounts show that in the beginning, Internet use was mainly a leisure time activity for youngsters — mostly used for entertainment, social communication and studying. It is remarkable that for some the arrival of the Internet came only briefly after the first landline phones became established in Vietnamese households throughout the 1990s. The 1990s and early 2000s have thus been a very dense and multilayered time period of media development and new technologies entering the everyday lives of Vietnamese urbanites.

The tradition of collective use in times of postwar scarcity (e.g. TV), the density and fast developments after *Doi Moi* are reasons why generational gaps in the use of particular media technologies appear less blatant. There are hardly any non-Internet users in the sample (except Tao) and Facebook for example is similarly popular among younger and elder respondents if we look at their MCRs. Radio is similarly unpopular across all age groups today. The data therefore signals little generational differences in the actual

technologies used for mnemonic purposes despite different media socializations of the age groups.

However, when we look at **media content**, particularly music, different media socializations seem to factor in more strongly. The most obvious differences can be seen in the value and listening of folk music. While some of the elder respondents of the first and second age group recalled growing up with folk music and acknowledged their value as heritage, almost none of the young informants included these in their MCRs as musical tradition of the past (except Hoa).

*We already had radio when I was 7. And until I was 18 we had our first television set. In the past the radio was relatively small. My father bought it to listen to music or Cai Luong. At that time, I imagined that there was a little person on the radio who sang, so I always looked through to see if there was someone. (Oanh, \*1954, SVN, l. 49)*

*[...] Cải lương. People like me I don't think we watch it anymore. After my generation, this thing will be on the tourist place or the museum. I think so. Or they broadcast it to make people remember like we had that in the past. My parents doesn't like. Even my parents, they don't like too much about folk music or cải lương. My grandparents, they like it. [...] (Hai, \*1991, SRV, l. 169)*

*They used to see some relax program just as music or some film. Yeah. Many kind of film and traditional music. In Vietnam, they call it cai luong. Cai luong is one of the traditional music. Folk music. (Hau, \*1975, RVN/SRV, l. 35)*

*[...] at that time music has "Nha nhạc cung đình Huế" - that means the music in Huế is also very good or "Đàn ca tài tử" in the south, they sang guitar with especially "cải lương" in Vietnam. [...] I don't know anymore if you wait, how long it can still live. Then, too few people stay, the young people are completely foreign. [...] (Hop, \*1958, DRV, l. 103)*

The music and performance art of *cải lương* ("reformed opera") mentioned here emerged in the early 20th century under French rule and "bears the imprints of many colonialisms" in Vietnamese history, including French and Chinese (Nguyen 2012, 257). One of its key elements is the nostalgic refrain *vong cổ* ("lament for the past"). *Cải lương* has been considered an expression of national identity under colonialism and (particularly Southern) Vietnamese culture (ibid., 260; Taylor 2001, 103). Most HCMC residents who mentioned it did not refer to it as explicitly "southern" cultural good. Besides its great popularity in the 1940s and 1950s, *cải lương* regained fame in the post-unification years when e.g. Western music and *nhạc vàng* was banned, particularly in rural regions (Taylor 2001, 145-146).

For elder respondents, other folk forms of music beside *cải lương* are not only linked to childhood memories of media use but also values and hardships of rural life. As many of the elder informants have grown up in a peasant family and only later moved to the cities for education, it is likely that they value folk music more not only for their childhood media experience but for their life in the countryside. Young informants in the study who were born and lived in the city ever since often did not assign it much meaning and do not relate it to their own urban lifeworlds.

Two other music genres have been particular markers in time and space, especially for elder respondents' media socialization: revolutionary or "red" music (*nhac do*) that was meant to encourage for battle and victory of the DRV during war times (Olsen 2008, 266) and pre-1975 "yellow music" in the RVN. While the emergence and the performance of these music genres can be clearly located, the airwaves and records did not halt at the 17th parallel where Vietnam was partitioned. Moreover, post-unification bans on e.g. yellow music were ignored across the country.

*And you know, when we're children, a lot of music from south Vietnam is forbidden in north Vietnam. You know that? But we like to listen to the south Vietnam music. [...]that is very sad, very always I love you but why you go and so on like that, not love story, love song by Trinh Cong Son, Trinh Cong Son is another topic, but I don't, I didn't listen to Trinh Cong Son music too, just very sad and always broken heart, the south of Vietnam. And now I think this music is, it's meaningless, why at that time I listen very, very, with all of my heart and so on. [...] (Duong, l. 22)*

Duong's (\*1970, Hanoi, DRV) account illustrates that she did not listen to *nhac vang* for ideological reasons but because she connected to it at an emotional level as a child. Earlier, we also learned about Nhung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) who enjoyed listening to red and yellow music alike. These examples show that at least listening and enjoying "yellow music" is not confined to a particular generational or social group with particular ideological or nostalgic leanings. It is not only pre-1975 RVN residents in the sample who identify with that music or would openly claim it as a southern good. Although the assigned meanings of personal memories are likely to diverge, the examples illustrate that *nhac vang* can, although more rarely, as well be part of the media socialization of northern residents and younger people. For "red music", there is also some transgenerational continuity across generational groups. While most listeners belonged to the eldest age groups (e.g. Huong, Lan, Kiet), some of the middle-aged (e.g. Nghia, Duong) and younger ones (Nhung, Binh) also liked it. As in Nhung's case, it is likely that this slight transgenerational continuity in music taste within middle and younger generations has been inherited through parental media use. Similar as for "yellow music", the reception experience and reasons for having that music in their MCRs differs between the various age groups.

*it's about, the songs, the music was about the revolution, the struggle against foreign invaders or as they called them. it's, it's encourage bravery during war time. [...] historical accounts and politics aside I find that music actually quite appealing. it suits my taste. the tune, the tune, the sound, the music, the, the beat everything. well, if I am just listening to it, I think I actually like it. (Binh, l. 155)*

*Because some the song in the war and when everybody singing and feeling about in the war around. But the now, the same song, but the now the war stop already, but now different. The feeling different you know. (Nghia, l. 126)*

*so many people, old people like me, who are so, so important for these days (...) so in my family, like my father for example, who also likes to watch this show or my ?, who also likes it very much*

*and I mean many people in my age but the older people, who find these songs very important. And former of the time when they were still young people. (Lan, l. 13)*

While the youngest listener, Binh, stressed the musical aspects of the songs, the oldest, Lan, links it directly to her youth during wartime in Vietnam. Middle-aged Nghia noted that present times of peace change the perception of the music. The comparison therefore suggests that although the music and its general meaning are mediated across age groups, the difference lies in the affective connection with the music that is based on life experience and youth during war. It is therefore not only the mere exposure to media during one's formative years but rather the biographic and socio-political context of appropriation that seems to make the difference here. At least in that case, we see that the lived war experience the music attends to makes a difference in the affective quality of remembering collective pasts. It adds a more personalized nuance. In that regard, we cannot fully discard the Mannheimian (1959, 296) argument of "personally acquired memories" being the ones that really "stick". Yet, the precondition is that they need to be emotionally charged based on one's own biography.

It also needs to be noted that "red music" did not play any role among young urbanites in HCMC and did naturally occur more often in MCRs of respondents who made a revolutionary family background explicit.

In terms of media socialization of the varying age groups, it stood out that middle-aged respondents in particular recalled viewing socialist television productions from all over the socialist world.

*yes. It was a, the film I remember or some film of Mexico, Mexico? Yeah, maybe Mexico. „Rich people cry also“ is the title (laughing). Yeah it is the title. (unverständlich) with Mario... So you know when people look tomorrow the people in the Market, they talk about „what do you think about Mario? what do you think about ? and do you think they will marry?“ or something like that. So everybody, everybody was watching only one film and they will talk about that tomorrow morning (laughing) at the market. (Kim, l. 43)*

*Great of course, so yes, especially for us kids. It's as if we had a completely different world in the house (laughing) as we say, so we learn because of it, so through television that there are other countries, too, for example that there are people with different skin colors. (laughing) I can remember. That it at that time also so many channel about Cuba, so with Fidel Castro and he made completely strongly impression on me with such a large beard. so for example we suddenly was so, suddenly we get pictures from other countries other worlds, also great. Back then, we were only allowed to see films from the Eastern Bloc, films, animated films, things like that, yes (Thuy, l. 12)*

While the scope, time and access to television content throughout the 1980s was limited, most middle-age informants were excited about their first TV experiences during their youth and the world it opened up to them in a country that had largely isolated itself following the 2nd Indochina War. Particularly the middle-generation also remembered the Vietnamese children's show *Nhung bông hoa nhỏ* ("Small Flower"). Kung Fu movies from

Hong Kong and China were also popular (e.g. Duong, Vinh). The data, however, does not indicate any further or significant continuities of these early TV experiences in middle-aged informants' MCRs, e.g. in the form of re-runs or watching of similar genres as other media and memory studies have explored, particularly in post-socialist contexts (Szostak/Mihelj 2017; Huxtable 2017; Bardan 2017; Reifova 2009). Respondents did also not express nostalgic sentiments about these early television content of their childhood as Armbruster (2016) detected in Western contexts.

In comparison to the elder generations, it is noticeable that younger informants' childhood media experiences are already infused with more Western programming (e.g. Dinh, l. 110; Phong, l. 73; Hai, l. 13, Quynh, l. 51) as well as Japanese and Korean entertainment (Yen, l. 46; Hai, l. 21, Quynh, l. 35). The data indicates that it is this more versatile media socialization in their early years that raises young urban Vietnamese's expected standards for TV and movie productions, including historical media. This more diversified media environment can also explain why younger students more often complained about the monotony of e.g. anniversary content.

Memory researchers further focused their attention on shared **media events** that would possibly qualify for a similar socio-historical location in a Mannheimian sense (Volkmer 2006a; Corning/Schuman 2015; Cohen et al. 2018; O'Sullivan 2010). Not having asked explicitly on particular national media events, except for Vo Nguyen Giap's death (see 5.2), the data from Vietnam did not reveal any consistencies in the responses on media events – not within and not across age groups. The answers were highly diversified, ranging from Ho Chi Minh's death (Hang, l. 29) and Armstrong's moon landing in 1969 (Dan, l. 43), the Christmas bombing in 1972 and the fall of Saigon in 1975 (Lan, l. 11), the soccer world cup of 1982 (Nguyen, l. 51) to the First Miss Vietnam in 1986 (Kim, l. 53), Vietnam's military withdrawal from Cambodia (Phu, l. 160) and the 22nd SEA Games in 2003 (Nhung, l. 109). This selection demonstrates how individually diversified the responses were already for national media events. Apart from the first broadcasted world cup soccer matches there are no overlaps in experiencing and recalling media events in the past. Dan's (\*1954, Binh Thuan, SVN) televised witnessing of the moon landing is particularly outstanding as it has officially only been broadcasted in the RVN and at a time when television devices were still scarce and air times limited.

Conditions of witnessing global media events for the elder age groups highly depended on their family's socio-economic status and thus availability of media technologies as well as the media agenda of the respective state and people's own interest in world affairs. The

collective media use that scarcity entailed and many informants of the elder and middle-aged group recalled, however, did not lead to a common perception of past media events. For news and media events, we therefore cannot speak of "generational entelechies" (Volkmer 2006d, 258) according to the available data of the case study.

The visual elicitation data on one more recent media event — General Vo Nguyen Giap's funeral — discussed in the interviews allows for a more direct comparison of age groups' responses to the news and their implications on historical consciousness.

The visual elicitation data revealed that the *Le Courrier du Vietnam* cover of Vo Nguyen Giap mostly evoked associations with his military achievements at Dien Bien Phu and thus the end of the First Indochina War and French colonial rule in Vietnam. Fewer interviewees associated him with the Second Indochina War and almost none referred to his political function in the reunited or later post-reform Vietnam. The victory over French colonial troops at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 gained him a heroic status among those who comply with the official historical narrative. The heroic narrative is not confined to a specific generation in the empirical data, but it spans across all age groups in the sample.

*Yes, there are so many events, this is a general and Dien Bien Phu to say and Spring Victory 1975, this is not valued by us, great value but also by others, a general of the world. He is making history, he is making the pride of the Vietnamese people and when he died and millions of people showed compassion for him, not only from the state, from the organization but also from himself.. (Cuong, \*195x, DRV, l. 74*

*He is the Vo Nguyen Giap. He is the hero of Vietnamese people here. He was die about one year ago when he was a hundred and three years old. Yeah. Every Vietnamese people admire him and me, too. He help Vietnam country to fight against some like USA or French, France but he is, I think the hero in the Vietnamese people. (Nhiem, l. 113)*

*this is the picture about our General, our country General Vo Nguyen Giap and [...]he has an outstanding military mind and maybe... and he has an excellent, you know, excellent skill in using the using the soldiers and military. And so that's why he became one of the greatest general in the world. (Trung, \*1992, SRV, l. 188)*

All these examples have in common that interviewees treated their narratives of heroism, admiration and military success about Giap as an unquestioned consensus and universal truth among all Vietnamese and even globally. The persistence and parallelism of official narratives of Giap as "greatest general in the world" and "hero of Vietnamese people" in responses of unrelated informants across age groups is striking.

Yet, there were also a few indifferent and critical responses to his printed portrait and reported death in the media.

*So the first one is about General Vo Nguyen Giap. And to me (...) he doesn't mean, doesn't really mean anything to me because, you know, my family, you know about my family history and maybe the first thing that came to my mind maybe is the, on day he died and they put on some, you know some condolences you know, to feel sympathy for vietnamese government when he died, yeah. (An, \*1992, SRV, l. 83)*

*He is the one that I like, but maybe he is a coward. a good person, but a coward person. That means he cannot, he does not dare to do anything. (Dan, \*1954, SVN, l. 79)*

*This is the picture of Mr. Vo Nguyen Giap. He is popular with many Vietnamese. His funeral was very importantly organized. (Tuyet, \*1954, SVN, l. 99-100)*

This set of examples show that not all Vietnamese share the dominant narratives and perception about Giap as the previous set of responses suggested. There is almost neutral indifference about his death in the cases of An and Tuyet. Tuyet's wording also diverges by her speaking of "many Vietnamese" and not "the Vietnamese people" and thus in less absolute terms. Dan, who expressed his anti-communist stance several times in the interview, was the most critical one about Giap. It needs to be noted that the rather indifferent and critical remarks largely stem from HCMC residents and informants with non-revolutionary background in particular.

The visual elicitation data on a past media event and news thus show that although most of the respondents knew about the event, they assigned different meanings to it. These different meanings reflect different historical consciousnesses, e.g. about Giap's heroic status in Vietnamese history. As we have seen, age does not account for these differences in historical consciousness. Differences also surface between informants with similar media socialization (Trung and An). The only factors that therefore explain these differences are family backgrounds, different familial or socio-political socializations.

Looking particularly at media generations and media socializations shows that respondents of the various age groups differ in regard to the media technologies and variety of media content they grew up with during their formative years. The data, however, does not indicate that these different media socializations led to profound differences in the plurality of people's MCRs except for the clear decline in folk music among young respondents. Yet, varying media socialization, e.g. with particular music, can make a difference in the later or repeated reception of that music or mnemonic content if linked to emotionally charged autobiographic memories.

Growing up in a more pluralistic media environment also explained higher expectations in standards of production and aesthetics of mnemonic content, particularly motion pictures, as well as saturation with repeated anniversary content.

The analysis of media events in the course of socialization did not reveal any generational patterns. Large-scale sports events of the 1980s such as soccer world cups accounted for the only overlaps among middle-aged informants. Responses to one particular commemorative media event, Giap's death, showed that its relevance largely depended on family histories and autobiographic experiences instead of age or media socialization. The

next subchapter therefore provides a closer look at similar social locations with regard to socio-political events.

### 7.1.1.2 *Socio-political socialization*

Before the adoption of the Mannheimian concept of generation to media socialization (Bolin 2017; Hepp et al. 2014; Volkmer 2006a), the "common location in the social and historical process" (Mannheim 1959, 291) originally referred to a similar range of shared experience through social and political events during their formative years (Olick/Robbins 1998, 123).

The sampling strategy in this case study (see 5.1) followed this original understanding, assuming that the formative experiences of war, of post-war-scarcity during the *bao cap* period (1975-1986) and of post-reform would possibly make a difference in the ways people engage with collective pasts. Additionally, I have adverted to the different ideological socializations through family backgrounds, education and media in the DRV and RVN prior to unification. Researchers on post-socialist collective memory argued that the socialization under differing political regimes could result in intergenerational gaps after socio-political transitions (Reifova et al. 2013, 212-213).

As notions of "media generation" or "war generation" represent academic attributions to particular age cohorts in the sample, let us briefly look into respondents' self-perceptions of "their" generation. The data indicates that elder respondents define themselves rather in terms of their experience with socio-political and traumatic events, social values and responsibilities than with regard to their media experience.

*Our generation is more in the wartime and this time is still pressure in our head. That is first and then the second in this time is, they say, many problems you have to survive and what else? After the war you hope that life will get better but it is not as good as it could be. [...] in our time generation I think almost every 60 years old, they say, you can say so, can't do anything (...), because in this time you can't or no more strength or no more desire and then people hope or wait for the children and then more good opportunities for the children [...]. (Hieu, DRV, l. 303-305)*

*My generation is actually very proud of it. We have experienced war and also poverty. Now we live in peace and every day changes life forever. (Thu, DRV, l. 90)*

*The current generation is active, but mine was more gentle and we think more about our family. (Tuyet, SVN, l. 196)*

*When I was 18, I felt like I could carry the responsibility of a family, but today, despite access to information, an 18-year-old is still a child who only wants to eat, sleep and go out. [...] In my generation, people were already very mature at 18. (Oanh, SVN, l. 167)*

*(giggling) I would say that the lost of the past (giggling). we had a lot of expectations in the past. we, my generation, grew up, when the French left. yeah, the Vietnamese government then. I mean the government of the Republic of Vietnam took power from the French and when we were young we had many opportunities to move up in the ladder of power because the French left and we were the very few people who graduated from universities. we had to move up. we had a lot of expectations. and after 1975 we lost most of those, yeah. (Hung, FIC, l. 194)*

The selection of examples show that elder respondents who grew up in the DRV conceived of themselves as characterized by war time experience and the survival of hardships (Hieu, Thu) while those growing up in southern Vietnam pointed out family values, responsibility, maturity (Tuyet, Oanh) and lost opportunities post-1975 (Hung). While we see a difference here on the basis of the varying (ideological) socialization in different states, it is noteworthy that both, Hieu and Hung, speak of their generation as one with unfulfilled expectations after unification. The differences are not absolute.

In the comparison on media generations, I have already pointed out in the context of music that it is not only media experience of the past, but also autobiographic experience related to it that makes a difference in the appropriation of mnemonic content. The interview data attests that it is the traumatic experience of war that ultimately differentiates elderly's reception experience of mnemonic content about that time.

*When I see the programs about bomb time of war, I remember the past when I ran away from the bomb. During the day I watch this scene on TV, I dream about it at night. It is even very authentic. I have a huge fear of that again. In my dream I said to myself: "No, here is only a dream", but was I also against it: "no, this is already the truth". I watch the scene when America bombed Hanoi for many days, it scared me again. (Phuong, FIC/DRV, l. 276)*

*I personally think that only those people who have experienced the time of war can deeply understand the program "Proud Melodies". There are also a few times when I heard the older songs, tears came to my eyes. But maybe the younger generation cannot understand that. Because they have only heard stories about it, so they have not experienced or endured it themselves. [...] Even the young people were already doing military service during the war to protect the country. And the women at home had to do all the tasks that would normally be done by the men. There are so many beautiful songs like "diligent furrow". [...] I don't think there are any young people who cry over a single song of "Proud Melodies". You can check this out when you do an interview with them. And me personally: every time I hear "busy furrow" or any song about Nha Rong Harbor, I still cry. (Hang, DRV, l. 106-108)*

*We have two idea too [about the show Giai Dieu Tu Hao]. One is for, one is against (both laughing). My daughter and my son are young, so they are for the young people and my and my husband are the same here (both laughing). So we stand in the generation of the adult, the old generation and we talk about it. I say "I like it" but my children say "I don't like it". (laughter) [...] We will always have a generation gap. [...] (Huong, RVN, l. 60-62)*

These examples illustrate again the affective dimension that autobiographic experiences of war add to the appropriation of mnemonic content. Respondents themselves argued that their emotions about or preferences for this mnemonic content distinguishes them from younger generations. The emotional effects described in the first two examples do only occur in this intensity because of lived experiences. Lived experiences seem to increase the intensity and quality of mnemonic content as "time-travel tropes" (Pickering/Keightley 2015, 70). Phuong's example demonstrates that this is not only the case for music but also TV programs.

Middle-aged respondents described their generation predominantly as one that grew up in peace and in times of major socio-political transitions.

*For the younger, I think the... when you mention about the history, in the past, for younger, now they have a lot information, not like me, they have Internet, they have the friend in the oversea, open, now we are the open country, the before my time is closed country, people say, I can't hear it. (Duy, l. 137)*

*We were born in safety. When we grew up, the war already passed and many people died for peace [...]. (Nguyen, l. 173)*

*It is a poor generation because, we, we don't have any idea, idea. We don't have a big idea, we don't have big activities in our life and we don't have a real memory about the past. So, I think that we, we, we seem like a tree without roots, you know, because the roots, the real roots is cut, you know. And we are disconnected with the history, with the culture. Because you know, a lot of people in my generation they could not read in ancient Vietnamese, so like Chinese writing, we couldn't. When you go to pagoda, when you go to ancient building, we could not read anything in Vietnamese writing. And all memory was constructed by revolution song, revolution history, propaganda and literature propaganda, music propaganda, you know. So, we, we are a poor, a poor generation, but I think there are not a lot of people who realize that. (Kim, l. 121)*

*For my lifetime is determined this so-called opening period. Perestroika, yes that comes from Gorbachev. It started in 1986. And then Vietnam copied it and then they say that "Doi Moi" has a lot of intrinsic value. So, between the people who lived before that time and after that time, it is totally different. And there is almost a consensus that our generation is the so-called "Lost Generation". Because you are already grown up and this period is here, it has totally different experiences and so on and with that the values and the young people, because the environment is very different, you have different values and others and we have to live on into this period but we are lost, yes, from here to here. (Vinh, l. 140)*

*I think people in the age of my generation, many people did not suffer so much about the war so they might not understand so much about the history so [...] If their parents could not talk with them [...]. I shouldn't think so much about the history because it's in the past so we should not pay attention to the history so much because it is not good. Now is a beautiful time so they didn't, they shouldn't. We should direct to the future, how to make our family to have a good condition or the good living standard [...] (Hau, l. 247)*

*I think my generation is very old-style. I'm proud of old style. I still want to keep old style. Yes. Very, very nice. [...] Old style, you know very special, very nice. Always think about the other people, not ourselves. The way to support to help for other people. We always think how we can do better for other people. That's very nice. (Hien, l. 181-183)*

Growing up in peace is the major difference that middle-aged respondents make in comparison to their parents and grandparents. The transition from a closed to an open country was another central theme in the perceptions of "their" generation. The experience of the *bao cap* period also served as a marker to distinguish them from younger people who grew up at a time when Vietnam had ended its international isolation and media development took off. The wide access to and plurality of media technologies available to young people actually marked a difference for middle-aged informants who still experienced postwar scarcity.

Although they experienced *Doi Moi* and its consequences, Vinh's (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) critical view implied that they do not consider themselves as having benefitted as much from the liberating effects as the young generation did. Vinh regarded the "197x"-generation as a "lost" one. His notion of a "lost generation" is founded on the feeling of being stuck and alienated in a value system that is not one's own. This view is to some extent underscored by Hien (\*1971, Hanoi, DRV) who described her generation's "old style" that relies on values of solidarity and selflessness.

Similarly critical is Kim's self-perception of belonging to a "poor" generation that does not have its own ideals and was betrayed over its own cultural origins by the memory politics of a constraining authoritarian regime. These more critical self-perceptions derive particularly from informants who considered themselves literates and intellectuals.

For middle-aged respondents, the interview data further presents examples of generational delineation on various accounts of media appropriation and use.

*It's about the song about the past – the famous song in the past to(...) encourage the Vietnamese people, to be brave in the war. Some songs to encourage the soldiers. Some songs to encourage the farmers, the teachers something like that. The victory moments in history. [...] My husband like it very much. At my age, I am the old generation. This song is not suitable for the young now. They don't like this kind of music. (Linh, l. 239-245)*

*I always love to collect the old picture, specially the black and white picture about the old village and or old Hanoi street and so on. That's always I love to, but that is only my dream, until now I could not do that. because it's also remind us about our childhood, for example this picture is also very nice and very attractive. But I think for the young people like my children now, they don't care about that. But for me, I think that is so very attractive about that. That is our (?) childhood, spend a lot of time during these. (Duong, l. 60)*

*yes as I said, people read few cultural books or literature. Young people read little, talk a lot, are more superficial [...]. and somehow I have the feeling that the young people who have no connection to this city anymore. This city will be a place that is only a place for people to earn money. (Vinh, l. 108)*

*Normally in Vietnam, now, we don't, how can we say, it's difficult to attract the people to go to the theater because one of the film like that, you know, because now we are connected to the Internet and who go to the theater is the, for example mainly the young people and they always like to watch what is the, how can we say, the bomb movie, that the high score movie from the United States or from the Europe, for example. Amazing Spiderman and so on. And in Vietnam now I think it's very difficult to attract the people, even on the television. Because a lot of channel in the TV now. (Duong, l. 74)*

The generational demarcation illustrated in these examples generally addresses younger (urban) Vietnamese differing preferences in media use. Similar to the elder age group, Linh (\*1979, Thai Binh, SRV) remarked the declining interest in revolutionary music that she and her husband strongly value. While she and her husband did not experience wartime, their passion for revolutionary music is rooted in their familial socialization with both their fathers having served in the People's Army (PAVN).

Duong (\*1970, Hanoi, DRV) further noted that in an open and media-saturated society as Vietnam is now, young people are hardly attracted by domestic and/or historical film productions and media content. She saw one of the reasons in the strong competition with productions from abroad and ready available online content. Her own interest in historical photographs of Hanoi's old quarter and rural villages originated from her own childhood memories. Vinh had a similarly strong identification with HCMC as his hometown and summoned that young HCMC residents would be disconnected from the city, regarding it only as a place for a professional career. He diagnosed a decline in reading novels and actual books in order to engage with the cultural history of their home country or town.

This criticism illustrates the intergenerational value gap of Vinh's previous statement. All of the examples illustrate the respondents' impression that young Vietnamese would not be interested in those (mnemonic) media they personally still value and connect to.

There also seems to be a tendency among middle-aged respondents of critically questioning the way mnemonic content used to be communicated to them during their formative years.. Some of them recalled particular moments during their early adulthood while moving to southern Vietnam or studying or working abroad that have changed their historical consciousness and perceptions about how collective memory was publicly communicated (e.g. Van, Kim, Phu). Some of these encounters were facilitated by increased mobility and connectivity of interviewees in the post-reform era.

Third-generation respondents painted a slightly different picture of their age cohort. Similar to views of middle-aged respondents, however, they do in fact identify themselves by their extensive use and appropriation of media technologies. It is therefore the only age group that defines itself as an actual "media generation" along with socio-political events and value orientations.

*Our generation? [yes] That means me and my friends? [yes exactly] oh well, then I can say that there are many of us who are not interested in history and Vietnamese culture at all. There are already many people because they think that today is the foreign knowledge and foreign culture is very very very interesting and more, more favorable for their future career. [...] But for me and yes I can say for my friends also that we have very same opinion that our art and culture is very beautiful. We are interested in art and culture, history. Yes and we want to live with our parents and grandparents and listen to the stories, yes. And normally, and we, and me and my friends we want to work abroad but live back to Vietnam. (Quynh, I. 112)*

*Dynamic, dynamic and curious but and I think that they are more enthusiastic than the older generation in general because they (...) they I don't know maybe because they are (...) they are more likely to (...) to to discover to discover the outside world. Because you know for the past okay for the past, the older do not have much media right and then now in nowadays there more media for the young generation to do to have and to (...) to like to research. And it's easier and it's like (...) it motivates them maybe it somehow motivate them to (...) maybe to go outside and to go abroad like that.*

*we are the you know young generation so we don't experience the hard time in the war so it's like we (...) actually that we don't understand much we can feel we cannot I mean we cannot feel you know the (...) freedom we cannot feel the freedom much. (Trung, I. 112, 308)*

*well, I can hardly say it DID affect me personally because when I was born in 1994 the transition has already been made. and I guess I should be grateful because I was one of the first generations to enjoy all the, the accomplishments of the renovation period. but I would say that without that transition, without the renovation, my life would be entirely different from now. (Binh, I. 218)*

*We live, I was born in the peace, but my father was born in the time when Vietnamese war still didn't finish, so maybe, I think I more happy, my life more easy than my mother my father. [...]the younger generation, their live maybe more easy than me, because the technology and because the development of our country, [...] (Dinh, I. 328-330)*

*I think have two, to separate, very separated kind of young people in Vietnam. Who they can keep in touch, they can connect to the world very good, they can have, they have the ability to learn, to, to, to be a part of the world very well. [...]But another, another kind and they can not use the simple way to, the simple things to, to, to live, they depend on too much their parents, [...] (Yen, I. 187)*

As the statements exemplify, young respondents understand themselves clearly in global terms. This global mindset is mainly driven by professional goals and thus aspirations for upward social mobility. Media technologies are understood as facilitators of this aspired global connectivity and higher living standards. Despite this global perspective that shares some characteristics with what Volkmer (2006d, 262) called "Network Generation", some of the young informants still expressed an obligation towards the elder generations and their country (e.g. Quynh, Binh).

It is worthwhile to note that young respondents have been the only ones in the sample who did not conceive of themselves as one social unit and differentiated within their own age group. This differentiation was mainly based on behavior, social values (Yen; Binh, l. 202) and interest in Vietnamese history and culture (Quynh).

In terms of socio-political events, young respondents emphasized similarly to the middle-aged group that they were able to grow up in peace and that renovation, although not experienced directly, had made a difference in their lives. We therefore see some overlap in the self-perception of the middle and young generations in socio-political terms. This transgenerational continuity in consciousness about living in peace and with higher living standards stands at the same time for a persistent collective sentiment of moral debt (*on*) and obligation towards the elderly who experienced war and hardships, particularly within one's own family.

Focusing on informants' generational self-perception revealed that the elder and middle generation do define their age cohorts rather in terms of socio-political events such as war and renovation respectively than in terms of their media habits. The young group were the only ones who identified themselves as an actual "media generation". All groups also defined themselves or differentiated each other on the grounds of social values.

For communicating memories, these generational aspects again confirmed that lived war experiences and scarcity among elderly made a difference in media reception of mnemonic content about that time period, particularly on affects. Life in the RVN and media use were only subtly connected by few elderly through preferences in "yellow music" (Oanh, l. 91; Tuyet, l. 97). Middle-aged respondents still showed a stronger connection to rural life and their hometowns that among others motivated their engagements with the past. The critical and curious ones among them reported on changes of historical consciousness in the course of their young adulthood and opening of the country, partially facilitated by new media technologies. Through their range of media skills, young respondents considered themselves globally connected. Mass-mediated historic content competes with a multitude

of other foreign media productions. Thus intrinsic motivation and family histories are key when turning to mnemonic content. Otherwise its relevance — such as in the case of folk music — dwindles due to the felt disconnection to contemporary urban lifestyles.

Across all age groups, the data exposes the significance of family socialization and parental media use. While some scholars argue that the importance of social location in a Mannheimian sense is declining and social mobility rising in changing and converging media environments (Süss 2010, 127), the interview data from Vietnam signals that an individual's social location cannot be completely isolated from parental or ancestral social locations. If someone's parents have suffered from communist post-unification politics, it is still unlikely that he or she would become a party member or be attracted by propaganda if family relations are intact. The other way around, the greater availability of media technologies and information among younger respondents has for them not ultimately led to an increased inquiry into contentious collective memories in Vietnam. The social divides are therefore likely to persist subtly in silence as long as time witnesses live between those who know about contested pasts and those who do not know. As intimate ties always stood out even with regard to generational aspects the next subchapter concentrates on particular social units of significance in people's MCRs.

### 7.1.2 Social bonds through communicating memories

The empirical data indicate that generations do not represent a social frame that people would naturally refer to in reflecting about collective pasts in the everyday. This subchapter therefore turns its attention to social entities that are actually part of respondents' MCRs. In order to discuss how people make sense of their social bonds through communicating memories, I will concentrate on socially inclusive and exclusive dimensions of MCRs.

Several researchers stated that collective memory bears cohesive forces for particular social groups (e.g. J. Assmann 2008; Leonhard 2014; Simko 2016). On the basis of prior research and this given data set, we can conceptualize such cohesive forces of communicating memories in the following ways. If we understand collective memories as (perpetuated) knowledge about the past, inclusive dynamics lie (1) in a commonly shared stock of knowledge about past and (personal) experiences that are perceived as important for the existence of the social group. (2) Cohesive forces further arise through the preservation and (ritualized) revival or reactivation of this knowledge (Davis 1979; Keppler 1994) (ritualized practices). (1) and (2) can be traced in the empirical data and the summarized MCRs by examining the reference groups, social actors and content that MCPs address. This view

also includes MCPs carried out together in a group, including commonly consumed media. The perspective on inclusive and exclusive dimensions of MCRs therefore cuts across the categories of mnemonic forms and practices of communication.

A third dimension of inclusive group dynamics relates to the cognitive-affective level, namely to an (3) articulated sense of belonging to a certain group either in the description of respondents' MCPs or their elicited memories. This sense of belonging is e.g. expressed by an inclusive "we"-pronoun or verbalized emotions such as empathy and solidarity in interviewees' statements or adherence to social role expectations and thus social group conventions. Hepp et al. (2014, 13) stressed the meaning of communicative connectivity and an affective sense of "we" for processes of communitization — a specific form of social cohesion (*Vergemeinschaftung*) in the sense of Max Weber (1966). Inclusive dimensions do not always affect existing group members only but also new members to a social group. From a memory research perspective, Jan Assmann (2008, 114) pointed out that affects, including felt obligation, make memories meaningful to people and their social bonds.

In the empirical data, dissociative or socially exclusive dimensions refer to (4) respondents' descriptions of mnemonic communication practices of others and not their own and thus are usually not part of the single-case MCRs. Yet, when respondents do compare their own practices to the ones of others, they usually indicate the boundaries between one's own and other groups. Individuals fulfill various social roles in a society and identify with varying social groups and entities throughout their lifetime. Kansteiner (2002, 189) noted that "we are always part of several mnemonic communities [...]". In the everyday, people juggle between these social roles and their entailing expectations and conventions.

In the following, I discuss the four dimensions of socially inclusive (shared knowledge, ritualization, affects) and exclusive dimensions ("we" vs. "them") of MCRs in reference to the social frames informants addressed, namely family, peer and mnemonic group contexts.

#### **7.1.2.1 Family communication**

Western literature on family communication, a field that evolved amongst others from interpersonal communication (not media research) (Galvin 2015, 1), pointed out a common history and timely relation as constituting elements for a family as a social group (Turner/West 2015, 10). According to Baxter and Braithwaite (2006, 2-3), families as an social entity are marked by long-term commitment, affection, biological relations, frequent interaction and expectations of long-term endurance of these social bonds. Prior communication and family memory literature suggests that such frequent interaction, endurance and affection is based on conversations about a family's past, their conventions

(Keppler 1994, 168; 2001, 146-148) as well as mnemonic media practices such as photographing or viewing (Kuhn 2002, 49; van Dijck 2007, 113). These practices include a self-reflexive mode (Keppler 2001, 138). They constitute family life and affirm the social bonds that make them a social unit. In the Vietnamese context, families have been described as "models for social organizations" (Jamieson 1995, 16) and their unity as a prime value (*ibid.*, 24). How is this inclusive unity preserved?

(1) types of knowledge/themes: A common stock of knowledge of and about the past as collective memories is one dimension of inclusivity and integration within families as social groups. Against the background of Vietnam's history, I was interested in what kind of knowledge or mnemonic themes are actually considered relevant for respondents in their familial contexts. I found that for the bonds of the family, it is particularly the *anecdotal knowledge about elder family members* of the previous two generations that is mostly present and shared within the family. In the collective familial memories of the ancestors such as grandparents and parents, respondents first and foremost spoke about professions, special skills and personal characteristics of the family members. Often this personal familial knowledge was not set into the historical context of the country. In the context of these descriptions of elder family members informants also addressed perpetuated, transgenerational familial memories. Given their profession or skills, respondents explained for example what kind of competences they had received from these family members. Luan (\*1976, Lao Cai, SRV) e.g. described that there is a tradition of family members becoming teachers in his family (l. 136). This example illustrates two main characteristics of perpetuated familial knowledge. First, it is predominantly positive characteristics of family members that are shared and thus potentially raise the value and pride in the family among its members. Second, the outlining of passed on skills and professions create a familial line and thus timely continuity, but also show the aspirations to keep a family's social status and thus continuity across generations. We have to keep in mind, however, that this way of articulating positive familial memories can also be a result of narrative conventions within the interview situation (Jensen 2008, 259).

In a lot of cases such perpetuated familial memories do not only refer to the perpetuation of factual (personal characteristics) or applied knowledge (skills), but also moral characteristics. Stories of virtues such as parental love, solidarity and respect towards the elder are projected on family members and described as inspirations and taken-away lessons for respondents' own (family) life (e.g. Linh \*1979, SRV, l. 262). In this way, characteristics and teachings of elder family members equal values considered important to

be carried on in present contexts. This transgenerational agreement on values among family members further strengthens familial bonds. *Stories of hardship* are another prominent mnemonic topic within families and serve a similar moral cause and at the same time reveal historical information about the time in which elder family members grew up (e.g. Huong, Duy, Linh). The passed on stories of hardship are usually based on war and post-war experiences and include stories of hunger, scarcity, loss and escape. The recounting of these stories among family members can be regarded as the verbalization of moral debt that the younger family members owe the previous generations in their current life. At the same time, this way families do reflect on their origins and darkest moments in life in order to assess their family's own achievements. Since the empirical data focused on the Vietnamese urban middle-class, a lot of recalled family histories by respondents in which the a simple family background (rural life, poverty) is indirectly compared to present-day commodities of modern urban life. In this sense, stories of hardship in the wake of present contexts of these families are also often stories of success and social advancement in post-reform Vietnam. These social changes that came with a more wealthy urban lifestyle, however, are often not only regarded as advantage, but in some cases also as a threat to traditional values in society. That is why stories of hardship and the familial self-reflection on one's family's origins serves also as a call for preserving considered traditional values in a vastly changing and modernizing society.

The empirical data showed also examples of familial dissociation on the basis of values. In the case of Kim (\*1979, Nghe An, SRV) whose family strongly believed in the socialist values propagated by HCM, she more and more disconnected with these values because of the exchange within her social network of Vietnamese intellectuals, Vietnamese refugees abroad and higher education abroad. While this disagreement on the social values and beliefs HCM represented and that are strongly rooted in her family led to familial conflicts, it yet did not break the familial bonds. Filial piety and respect towards the elder as traditional Confucian values eventually outweighed the disagreement on socialist values and were able to secure familial harmony. The disagreement on morals and values in familial remembering, yet had another consequence on the process of perpetuating familial knowledge. This consequence is that Kim will not pass on these socialist values she herself grew up with to her own son. In this case, the transgenerational continuity of familial bonds regarding socialist values is broken by the respondent with the founding of her own family, but it does not mean that familial ties dissolve completely.

*Stories of hardship* can further be interpreted as exclusive familial knowledge, particularly when these stories touch upon public mnemonic taboos. This addresses particularly stories of re-education and imprisonment or loss and escape of family members in the aftermath of unification of Vietnam. These intimate and politically sensitive memories are often kept within inner circles and thus might be considered as familial quasi-secrets. Quasi-secrets because it is not very likely that families were able to entirely veil their stories of reeducation or imprisonment from the community. Yet, these experiences of hardship of family members can be the reason for them to differentiate themselves from other families that did not experience harm under the Communist regime. In some families in South Vietnam, there is also a continuity of escaping Communism, first from the Viet Minh in the DRV in 1954 and then after unification (Großheim 2013).

Although often disconnected, in some cases personal familial knowledge is linked to narrations of national history. That is particularly the case if personal accounts add to official narrations of history as in the previous examples of reeducation (e.g. An, Dan) or if these refer to particular personal contribution to or involvement in an considerable important historical event. The latter often refers to contributions to the revolution and fight for national liberation in Vietnam that still remains a source of pride within some families (e.g. Phuong, Huong) and thus complies with the acknowledgement and encouragement of revolutionary families through government policies.

Another kind of mnemonic knowledge that plays an important role for the family as a social group is the sharing of *ritual and cultural knowledge*. That includes agreement on what are important days of celebration and commemoration for the family and which kind of cultural traditions are carried out in what way within the family. Although there is a common cultural frame for some cultural festivities, the ways in which urban middle-class Vietnamese families celebrate them might also have some specificities for the group, e.g. in families that have close family members abroad.

(2) rituals: The shared knowledge about ritual activities and celebrations within the family naturally includes that informants regularly apply such knowledge within the familial setting. The most often mentioned and thus most importantly considered occasions of reactivating familial knowledge are the annual celebrations of the Lunar New Year - *Tet Nguyen Dan* and the death anniversaries of deceased family members (*ngay gió*). Both festive occasions usually require gatherings of the extended family, special common meals and worshipping or commemorating practices. The family gatherings on these occasions provide a communicative space in the home of one family member. According to the

respondents, conversations among the family members on these days are in the foreground compared to other forms of communication such as TV (e.g. Hieu, l. 268). In some families with family members abroad media technologies and application such as Skype allow for keeping familial traditions over distance and without physical presence of all family members (e.g. Oanh, l. 98). During the common preparation, offering and sharing of food, family members exchange news, but also reflect on past experience or reminisce the deceased ancestors, particularly on death anniversaries. These are also the days when familial anecdotes are retold and personal characteristics of the deceased ancestors such as their favorite dishes (which are also cooked that day) are recalled (e.g. Thuy, l. 67). For some families Tet is also the occasion to update their written-down family trees. I witnessed these proceedings in the guest family during my field trip, but respondents did not mention this tradition. In this case, the family tree represents a mnemonic document that comprises the knowledge about familial ties and traces them back to an ancestral line.

While the Tet holidays as national holidays are celebrated on the same dates for everyone and come along with similar typical dishes, death anniversaries are celebrated individually in each family every year. There are differences between families in dates, dishes and the strictness of carrying out these rites according to cultural conventions. The urban lifestyle, the mobility of some respondents and thus separation from family members led them to alter or ease some of these conventions (e.g. Dan, l. 140). In this way, family members react on the social changes within their environment and adjust the rules to be more practical and still keep the ties and rites. It is important to note at this point that the centrality of ancestor worship in the empirical data shows that these familial ties do not end with a family member's death, but carry on to be cultivated across the worlds of the living and the dead (Jamieson 1995, 24). Besides ancestor worshipping rituals that come along with Tet and death anniversaries, eating rituals are further important elements on these occasions, but also on regular working days (Avieli 2012, 102). In the findings chapter I already pointed at the centrality of familial gatherings for dinner everyday. While family dinners represent an important social and normative convention for the integration of the group, we also noticed that it is often in the context of familial eating rituals that stories about hunger and hardships of the past are brought up again as constant reminders of acknowledging present living conditions of the family.

Other, but less frequently mentioned, ritualized occasions in the familial context were evening rituals and situations of common media reception. Different from earlier research on media use in Vietnam (Lichty/Hoffer 1978; Müller 2008), the context of common

media reception within family did not occur often in respondents' MCRs. The vast availability of media devices in middle-class urban households does not necessarily prompt collective reception contexts anymore. Urbanites can cater to their individual interests and needs and personalize their use.

(3) sense of belonging/we-conception/affects: Naturally, in family communication, we-conceptions also refer to the concept of "the family" as primary reference group. In most cases, respondents refer to the family on the basis of kinship. The kinship relations seem to naturally extend with marriage as some of the respondents would talk about their parents, when speaking of the parents of their wife or husband (e.g. Thuy, l. 219). In the context of Vietnam's history, family relationships have often been disturbed through partition of north and south, escape, evacuations and loss of family members during war times. These circumstances would affect the closeness of some of the familial relationships. The sample also showed that traditional conceptions of the family in the urban-middle class of Vietnam change or are void as some of the respondents' parents were divorced and raised by and lived with a single parent, usually their mothers (e.g. Quynh, Binh).

The child-parents relationship usually stood in the foreground in respondents' MCRs followed by the grand-child and grandparents-relationship. The closeness of the relationship is expressed by articulated affects of *love, respect, empathy, gratitude and moral debt* in the context of mnemonic family communication. The hierarchical, intergenerational familial relationships appear to be the most prominent within MCRs as the practices of informing and moral education show. These relationships and interactions between family members are the ones that outline the evolutionary developments of a family from past to present, including questions of social and regional origin. Communicating memories intergenerationally within the family marks perpetuation processes of knowledge. Hierarchical familial relationships in informants' MCRs represented the strongest social bonds.

These ties were carefully nurtured and treated with utmost respect according to each persons' familial role. Despite existing alienations or disputes over the past along e.g. ideological lines or due to geographical and physical distances, these ties were not shaken in their grounds. Individual opinions that contrast with the majority view of the family do not present a reason for dissolving familial ties and leave the social group. So while respondents in some cases might have distanced their own individual views from the ones of their parents in the interview (e.g. Kim, Phu, Tuyet), in the practice of family communication they usually described having worked out means to secure these

relationships. As we have seen in the empirical data, such means include "avoidance strategies" (see 6.2.2.4) in addressing sensitive mnemonic topics within the family and beyond, but also digital communication strategies in order to overcome physical distances and enable exercising familial rites (e.g. Oanh, Duy). The familial setting appears to be a highly regulated communicative space that restricts individual for the collective good of the family.

This limited openness in communicating memories for the harmony of family unity can thus be considered also an integrational strategy as opposed to previous sociological theorizations that have stressed the sharing of knowledge as a bonding element (Halbwachs 2008, 59; Knoblauch 1999). While respondents have not revealed individual secrets explicitly in the rather unnatural interview setting, the data includes hints about themes that are not talked about within the family (subsumed under a general category of *forgetting*). Such themes are either not considered relevant (e.g. Hau, l. 155), too "complicated" (Cat, l. 144) or too "bad/hurtful" (e.g. Tao, l. 256; Tuyet, l. 202). There is a tendency that negative affects only serve the social relation between family members when suitable for a moral message.

The empirical data includes only very few instances in which informants draw boundaries between their own and other families through communicating memories. Respondents expressed such dissociation along the lines of the degree of traditionality of and openness of communication within families (e.g. Trung, l. 284; An, l. 163), the regional origin and residency of families and the ideological background of families. I have noted previously that the social and geographical origin of previous family members and ancestors were often central in the family's communication about the past. A lot of the cultural rites entailed practices and even some personal characteristics of family members are explained through their places of origin. The homeland of the family is thus an important identity marker in mnemonic family communication. Hoa (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV) for example uses conceptions of "North" and "South" and thus regional identity to describe differences in the familial practices during *Tet* holidays. Other familial distinctions were based on political affiliations and interests within the family. While Vinh (\*1975, Hanoi, SRV), for example, described his family as largely non-political and thus negates the existence of contested or sensitive mnemonic topics within his family, Yen (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV) described that her family was different because they used to cooperate with Western forces as opposed to "socialist Vietnamese" (Yen, l. 118/134).

This zooming in on family communication demonstrates that socially cohesive forces through communicating memories emerge in the family through shared positive factual and anecdotal knowledge about ancestors, stories of hardship or scarcity and ritual knowledge. All of these types of communicated knowledge and themes carry moral value that is supposed to mirror an idealized vision of family and society (Jamieson 1995, 24). Communicating these memories is embedded in cultural and familial rituals on e.g. *Tet* holidays and death anniversaries that reaffirm the bonds with the extended family, including the dead, in an annual cyclic nature. Social bonds are further described in terms of affects such as love, respect, gratitude and obligation that also reflect familial social hierarchies. These findings further suggest that mnemonic communication within and among family members always strives for harmonious unity of the family (ibid.). The value of kinship and the unity of the family are prioritized in communicating memories in the family and stand above differing individual views. Individual secrets and avoiding strategies can therefore also be considered inclusive. Communicating familial memories is thus first and foremost a socially inclusive endeavour that overcomes minor dissociative impulses from single family members. Further details on familial norms will be provided in chapter 7.2.1.

#### 7.1.2.2 *Peer communication*

While family communication clearly represents the most prominent form of mnemonic communication among social groups, several MCPs include the interaction with peers. The findings chapter revealed that such peer communication first and foremost concerns social networks of friends and coworkers. Similar to the Mannheimian (1959, 297) understanding, these friends and colleagues can be regarded as contemporaries with whom informants shared experience at a certain point in their life.

The data shows that friendship and work ties can also overlap. Usually these social ties of friendship or/and colleagues consolidated over time and were built upon shared stages in life such as periods of education or daily work. Besides leisure time with the family, the current urban middle class in Vietnam spends a great part of everyday life of at work, at schools or universities. Vietnam a week is comprised of six working days.

For elder respondents of the sample, peers in the actual sense of classmates or fellow students and thus age cohorts do play a crucial role in the exchange of knowledge about a commonly lived past. That is different from the work context in which the particular professional role and a common professional status seem to be more binding than specific age.

(1) types of knowledge/themes: Social ties based on friendship and professional networks are partially determining the types of knowledge peers share amongst each other and the ways in which peers collectively engage with the past. Friends of the same school class, for example would attend the same history class and historical fieldtrips together. As Phu (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) reported such school trips were for example organized to the HCM mausoleum (l. 288-290). This example refers to the common appropriation of *national historical knowledge* by peers as one form of peer communication. The degree of engagement with historical knowledge and thus the group's involvement with historical topics depends on thematic interest and the way history is communicated to the group. Usually the common appropriation of historical knowledge in the classroom at school shows less identifying potential with the group than e.g. self-initiated trips to historical sites (e.g. Linh, Quynh) or common visits to veterans of the community (e.g. Hoa). The situation of common history education within schools thus seems to enfold less cohesive forces among peers, it is rather the character of commonly experienced excursions that fortifies friendship bonds. That is possibly the case because they are more applied and sometimes even self-initiated.

A second type of mnemonic knowledge shared among peers is personal knowledge about *commonly experienced life events and stages* such as common childhood experience in the same hometown (e.g. Duy, l. 248), work or studies (abroad) experiences (e.g. Huong, l. 68; Lan, l. 17; Hung, l. 113). The knowledge about common or shared experiences which thus exists exclusively for the concerning group provides a ground for identification with each other that can also go beyond age. Such personal knowledge can also represent critical or sensitive knowledge given the restrained options of communicating some topics in public in an authoritarian state. Earlier I introduced, Hung and Dan, two HCMC residents who grew up in the RVN. They explained in the interview that some information would only be discussed in their trusted friendship circles, e.g. positive aspects of the educational system of the RVN (Hung, l. 117) or anti-communist jokes (Dan, l. 69-71). These shared memories are based on the life experience of growing up in a state that ceased to exist and negative experiences made with communism. Members of the group thus share a commonality in knowing the "sociobiographical memory" of the collective of residents of a lost state and culture (Zerubavel [1996] 2011, 224). The felt constraints of communicating certain memories in public, especially those against the Party line, give the memories of the group a touch of secrecy and exclusivity. This exclusivity of this shared memories and the fact that they deviates from hegemonial mnemonic discourses constitute the existence of

the group (Bahrtdt 1997, 93). Similar observations of residents of a lost state grouping against dominant public narratives of collective memory were made in the German context (Leonhard 2014; Meyen 2013).

The deviant collective memories, however, are not confined to a physical place, but is also shared transnationally with those friends who emigrated. Although these personally shared experiences might be recalled on certain occasions by group members, the social group as such does not only exist for the sake of remembering certain events or happenings in the past. The empirical data indicates that it is rather the other way around that mnemonic practices reassure prevailing ties and the identity of the group.

A third type of mnemonic knowledge shared among peers are past experiences that members of the group *did not experience together* and may have preceded the existence of or someone's membership in the group (Keppler 2001, 148), but nevertheless create a common reference point to individual pasts and life courses. This type occurred in Linh's MCR, when she talked about the conversations with her colleagues about her and their first love stories (e.g. Linh, l. 100). This case of sharing individual but commonly comparable intimate memories might be rather an example for forming more affective bonds with colleagues beyond the context of labour.

Another type of knowledge concerns the sharing of fairly *recent individual experiences* such as travels, special events and celebrations. Usually these very recent memories have particular meaning for the person who shares them and serve to update other peers in times when the group is physically separated. This way, sharing of recent experience creates common mediated group memories. From a media socialization perspective, such mnemonic acts of media use can also be understood as acts of "self-narration" and "self-reflection" that create biographic experience as well as self-assurance within the group (Wegener 2010, 60). In other words, by sharing particular events with peers, individuals rate the importance of these events and thus anticipate what should be remembered of her or him by the group in the future (van Dijck 2007, 112-113).

A last type of mnemonic knowledge that transcends the categories of the historical or the collective and personal and yet represents a common symbolic identifier of the past for social groups is *popular music*. The interesting about popular music understood as one kind of mnemonic knowledge is that it is not claimed by a concrete social group but a wider conception of social commonality (Mannheim 1959, 288-290). As we have seen previously, music and its symbolic meaning appears to be a kind of mediated content that serves people to identify with a more vague notion of contemporaries and dissociate from other

imagined generational groups (e.g. Thuy, l. 38; Linh, l. 243). In both cases, the respondents referred to ideological songs, revolutionary songs known as red music and the song of the 10th anniversary of unification as indicative of "their" generation.

(2) rituals: Respondents provided less detailed information on ritualized MCPs among their peers than among family. This difference in the richness of data can indicate that mnemonic family communication outweighs mnemonic peer communication in meaning and thus supports the idea of the family as primary mnemonic group (Ryan 2010, 156).

The kind of regular mnemonic practices, respondents usually refer to in the context of peer interactions are the regular exchange of pictures and posts through social media, predominantly Facebook or via e-mail. The content of these posts usually refers to very recent experiences that could not be experienced together but yet wanted to be shared with peers in an updating fashion (e.g. Nhung). In these cases, contributing individual experiences and thus creating and sharing recent memories appear to be an unspoken and taken-for-granted group convention. Other such group norms are the sharing of pictures and greetings in the course of new years' celebrations and the sending of birthday wishes. The first years of the new year are usually spent with the family and close relatives. That is why mediated annual greetings belong to the social protocol of many of the peer groups, also particularly to those peers who live abroad. The annual occasion and biggest celebration in Vietnam often therefore represents an occasion to catch up with friends. From the interviews I could usually not reconstruct to which extent such festive greetings actually come along with longterm memories as opposed to very recent memories. It remains therefore debatable to denominate shared mediated content such as selfies during travels or Tet celebration as memories. They not always reminisce commonly lived experiences. Instead, however, these acts of sharing can provide the ground for collective remembering in the future (van Dijck 2007, 112). These instances of sharing self-produced content actually build up a pool of mediated experiences that can turn into collective mediated memories once they become the subject of group communication at a meta level. Further ritualized measures of mnemonic peer communication are regular offline meetings such as class meetings (e.g. Giang, l. 158) or the previously mentioned fieldtrips (e.g. Linh, Hoa). Usually class meetings have a regular time cycle whereas fieldtrips can be bound to certain holidays or commemoration days and thus follow the public calendar. In one case, the ritualized annual meetings of a peer group of contract workers with the Soviet Union were complemented with additional online communication in a closed social media group (e.g. Huong). The social media group in this example was particularly found for the

members of this pre-existing offline group. The advantage of the social media group is that materialized memories as in the form of photographs can be shared more easily in digitized form instead of viewing them together at a meeting. The viewing practice then becomes a virtualized group act and does not require the group members' simultaneous presence. How regular the group communication takes place online remains unspecified, but it is indicated that it also serves organizational or administrative purposes of the group such as the planning of meetings (Huong, l. 74-76).

Hanoian resident Lanh mentioned the collective singing of revolutionary music as a ritualized MCPs (l. 11). In her case such a practice materializes in singing along to the music performances when watching the TV show *Giai Dieu Tu Hao* ("Proud Melodies, VTV3) but she added that people of her "older generation" basically sing along whenever such songs are played. Given the fact that karaoke singing is a common cultural practice in Vietnam, it is rather surprising that karaoke gained so little attention in the interviews. The ordinariness of this cultural practice in daily life might be a reason for this lack.

Some of the ritualized collective mnemonic practices of a social group were strongly framed by institutional structures at work. Many of the commemorative practices can also be considered professional duties of memory work, e.g. on Veterans or "Martyrs' Day" (Großheim 2016; Malarney 2007). Such practices are represented rather frequently as a lot of the respondents worked as staff in the public sector and thus civil servants. Since the working context is often foregrounded in this context, it indicates that these conventions are considered as externally motivated rules for the group of colleagues rather than rituals that are initiated and applied for the purpose of the in-group. Rather the shared professional role requires these actions from the members of the group.

It is important to note that in none of the cases described peer relations existed solely on the basis of digital mnemonic practices. Usually the peer networks respondents addressed also required a certain degree of offline interaction. That means ritualized mnemonic online practices add to and support social bonds that were created and persist in the offline-world. The same holds true for mnemonic family communication.

(3) sense of belonging/we-conception/affects: I already pointed out previously that the social groups respondents usually identify with and apply linguistic "we"-constructions to are networks of friends, coworkers and in a few cases an imagined generational group (Mannheim 1959). In the examples, it becomes apparent that these networks are time-bound as they can be traced back to impactful stages during people's lives such as

childhood, youth and adulthood. These can coincide with important national historical developments.

Unifying potential of members of the social groups can further be seen in the references to common education at particular schools, studies, training or work abroad as well as the current profession of respondents and their peers. This cohesive potential thus does not only reflect common experiences but also relies on the experiences with common social structures and thus social class.

Another we-conception that occurred in the empirical data that lies across cohort and social class is based on the feature of witnessing. It thus creates a reference to a social group of witnesses that goes beyond the usual networks of peers. This rather vaguely defined reference group that two of the respondents, Hung and Dan, addressed and counted themselves into described a circle of people who provide evidence of public forgetting. The people who experienced events that are presently public mnemonic taboos and thus are potentially able to proof current memory politics in Vietnam wrong. Although such kind of quasi-secret knowledge has been described previously as shared knowledge among close friends, a closer view at the linguistic level of the we-conceptions expanded the group boundaries to a greater circle of undetermined time witnesses. The sense of belonging in these examples is thus nurtured by common experience based on age origin/location, class as well as the exclusivity of particular information or experience with a lost homeland (witnessing).

Usually respondents were not very explicit about their affectional side in the context of mnemonic peer communication. The sharing practices hint at a certain degree of empathy between group members; the commonly exercised commemorative practices at work at a sense of solidarity and common duty towards other marginalized social groups (e.g. veterans). Some respondents expressed feelings of gratitude towards their friends, but also for the career chances given (e.g. Hung). Nostalgic feelings were not explicitly expressed, but only hinted at in relation to peer groups. That was only the case with Hung and his fellow teaching colleagues about the advantages of teaching in the RVN as compared to now and in Huong's account on her meetings with fellow former Vietnamese contract workers in the Soviet Union ("We talk about the past, we laugh (laughter), we cry and talk, talk a lot.", l. 74).

In terms of dissociation, informants showed little specific group comparisons as a member of a peer group. In the context of career options, social class and witnessing pointing out the selectivity and exclusivity of their groups experiences as compared to a more general

other seemed to be the more common mode of dissociation, e.g. Hung's higher education for becoming a teacher in the RVN and studies in the US (l. 117). Verbal dissociations in respondents' memory work also occurred along ideological lines. In Giang's case that concerned the differentiation between classmates with and without revolutionary background (l. 158) and friends who are *Viet Kieu* and those who are not (l. 69). The latter also describes a forms of dissociation in the sense of national belonging and place of residence. Other distinctions on the basis of location were made by Phu and Nga. While Nga differentiated between the peers of her school and students abroad (l. 23), Phu distinguished his friendship networks according to "North" and "South" (e.g. Phu, l. 18, l. 236-248). The last and only very subtle dissociation occurred in Tuyet's account on criticizing mnemonic cultural practices of ethnic minorities in Northern Vietnam (Tuyet, l. 166-169).

### 7.1.2.3 Mnemonic group communication

In comparison to peer communication, social groups and relations discussed in this last subchapter concern social formations that are primarily based on a particular mnemonic cause. Mnemonic group communication gained least attention within informants MCRs as compared to family and peer communication.

(1) types of knowledge shared: In the few cases of mnemonic group communication the kind of knowledge shared among members was *cultural historical knowledge*, personal accounts of *everyday life in the RVN before 1975* and *war time memories*. All of these cases have in common that people bond and sympathize on the basis of their common interest in these particular mnemonic topics. Duy (\*1970, Nam Dinh, DRV) for example connects with other persons interested in preserving specific folk songs they consider cultural heritage. In another case, An (\*1992, HCMC, SRV) shares a common interest about everyday memories of living in his hometown Saigon before unification. Since he did not live at the time, he connected with other Vietnamese, mainly Vietnamese refugees abroad, in a Facebook group in which members share many informative posts and photographs (An, l. 75). The mnemonic online group thus provides a space in which marginalized topics of public memory in Vietnam and in host countries of diasporic communities can be shared freely and safely (Nguyen 2016, 15-16). In the third case of Nguyen (\*1975, Hai Phong, DRV) the common interest lies in the intergenerational exchange of war time memories of elders within the community (l. 163).

(2) rituals: In the previous examples, two mnemonic groups relied on actual offline meetings. The community events organized by the veterans in Nguyen's neighbourhood

are organized at least once a year. It cannot certainly be said whether he participates in the communal mnemonic events out of his own motivation to encourage intergenerational exchange or out of felt duty as a communal member.

Duy's meeting on the preservation of *Quan Ho* had only taken place once at the time of the interview. The one-time interview thus does not always allow to follow up on the regularity of activities in potentially new groups. It is therefore uncertain whether this kind of mnemonic group continued to exist in one form or another. An's mnemonic Facebook group *Dan Saigon Xua* ("The old people of Saigon") on the other hand did not require any physical presence or offline meetings, but instead technological assets and access to the Internet. At least for him as a member it exists solely online. The interaction of group members is based on the regular exchange of pictures and posts online but there seems to be no requirement on the regular contribution by each member. In fact, An himself only talks about his group engagement in terms of media reception and not about own posts or chats with group members. Given my own passive membership in the group it can be said that the norms and conventions of the group are very moderate. There also no timely pattern in exercising these online practices as group rituals.

(3) sense of belonging/we-conceptions/affects: The review of types of knowledge and rituals in the few cases of mnemonic group communication shows that the identification with members of the group can but does not necessarily rely on previous personal ties. The interest or belief in a common mnemonic cause is the main cohesive force and thus the main reason for the identification with the group. It seems as if personal information of each member or commonly lived experiences are not necessarily required for the initial formation or joining of the mnemonic group.

In Nguyen's case that is slightly different, we can assume that the identification with the mnemonic group is also based on empathy and solidarity with the elder members of his local community and that personal ties have also formed through sharing the same living space over time additionally to the common mnemonic cause. Thus there are also communal norms and conventions that play into the mnemonic cause. In Nguyen's case the local community as a social entity can also be understood as a mnemonic group with its own mnemonic activities.

For Duy, the mnemonic group is with this first meeting still in a period of initial formation. That is why the identification with the group lies solely in the common cause on taking action in preserving *Quan Ho*. A similar kind of solidarity in a common cause can be found in An's example. Members of the Facebook group can decide on their own as to what

extent they want to share their personal information and memories. They might as well remain anonymous and still be part of the group. An did not refer to knowing any of the members personally, nor having directly interacted with them through personally addressed communication. In this case, the past of members of the online group, however, is related to An's family history and the memories of his father as well. The inherited nostalgic sentiments about pre-1975 Saigon also connect An to the online group beyond a mere interest in historical facts. Thus through his familial bonds and family history he finds sympathy in a community with similar background a lot of whom left Saigon after 1975.

Accounts of dissociation have not been explicitly made on the grounds of these mnemonic groups. It seems as if they are already quite specific in their cause that comparisons to some other reference group are not made. In Duy's and Nguyen's cases the only differentiation made is on the basis of age and generation. While Nguyen rather wants to close the gap to some extent for the sake of the community, Duy has accepted generational differences and sees in these a reason for his actions and involvement in the group.

The discussion of social group formations who establish or reaffirm their bonds through communicating memories confirmed again that families present the "primary mnemonic community" and agents of "mnemonic socialization" (Ryan 2010, 156; Leonhard 2002, 295). Similarly, Halbwachs (2008, 61) noted "Our kin communicate to us our first notions about people and things." That also includes conceptions about collective pasts. We have seen that positive story-telling about ancestors and selected stories of hardship in communicating memories aims at forging an ideal image of the family. Communicating memories is embedded in cultural and familial rituals, especially *Tet* and *ngay gio*. The intergenerational perpetuation of knowledge and thus communicating memories aims to preserve one of the highest values in Vietnam — family unity (Jamieson 1995, 24). In contrast, peer networks rely stronger on more personalized, commonly lived or shared experiences, sometimes suppressed collective memories and their reactualization during regular face-to-face meetings. Mnemonic groups that rest solely on a mnemonic cause present the least tight and regulated ties among its members and rarely played a crucial role in people's MCRs. We can therefore conclude that in the context of this study, socially cohesive forces of communicating memories in the everyday (J. Assmann 2008; Leonhard 2014) enfold most strongly on the basis of pre-existing intimate ties.

## 7.2 Making sense of norms and values

The empirical findings presented in chapter six revealed several normative implications within informants' responses and MCRs. These normative dimensions materialize explicitly in the inductive categories of (1) *moral educating* as a normatively driven MCP, (2) *principles* of communicating memories within a particular social group as well as (3) expressed *normative views on public forms* of collective memories.

Reichertz (2010, 160) described norms as a set of principles of what one should do or not do in specific situations if someone wants to act and live according to particular values. Values are understood as "basic ideas about what is socially desirable" and provide general orientation for acting in social contexts (ibid., 159).

While these normative dimensions of inductive categories provide some insights on the individual and shared opinions on values and rules of communicating memories within particular social contexts, the empirical data also needs to be discussed against the background of broader academic discussions on the ethics of collective communicative remembering in societies. The academic debate on ethics of remembering primarily is most prevalent in the overlap of the fields of social sciences and political philosophy (Erll 2011, 55). This thread of academic discourse concerns first and foremost the question of moral responsibility in communicating memories as a social process. What can this study add to these theoretical strands?

The chapter on making sense of norms and values approaches the topic in two steps: In a first step, I will discuss the normative implications closely related to the empirical case study of this dissertation before opening up the discussion to the broader field of ethics of communicating memories.

### 7.2.1 Normative dimensions of MCRs

The reconstruction of informants' MCRs elicits three explicit normative dimensions, including (1) moral educating as a normative MCP, (2) normative rules underlying interpersonal MCPs and (3) opinions on public forms of collective memories in Vietnam.

#### 7.2.1.1 *Moral educating as normatively driven MCP*

(1) Moral educating as an MCP described mnemonic acts of communication that contain moral messages and strive for a pedagogical impact towards the addressee. While previous research showed that moral educating is also a practice of state actors in historical education (Doan 2005) or in mass-media (Nguyen 1992, 6-7), the data of this study proved

family communication to be the main context of this practice. Communicating about collective pasts within the family had the most obvious and immediate moral impact on informants according to their accounts. It is possible that this observation is the result of lower awareness about the intended moral teachings in history education or state media.

Yet, this observation encourages us to zoom in again on familial moral educating. As previously discussed, positive stories about ancestors, traumatic stories about hardships (see 7.1.2.1) as well as songs and perpetuated proverbs in the family (6.2.1.2) serve as main communicative means to shape and foreground exemplary characteristics of the family in society (see also Keppler 1994, 109). Moral messages based on collective memories are communicated hierarchically from elders to younger family members. The empirical data suggests that elder family members are perceived as the most significant moral authorities when engaging with collective pasts in the everyday. They represent agents of value orientation.

Communicating family memories as moral practice aims at a moral impact, especially on everyday behavior and general principles of social interaction. From the perspective of communication studies, this communicative practice of moral negotiation can also be understood as "practical discourse" in a Habermasian sense — namely, normative discourses on what is right or wrong (Averbeck-Lietz 2015, 187). In the everyday contexts of this study, arguments of moral educating as practical discourse are primarily based on lived experiences. Usually the recalled experience or knowledge of the past serves as exemplary point of reference for a moral issue discussed among family members. The interview method, however, usually did not allow for the extended reconstruction of such familial negotiation processes. Such moral negotiations can serve as a way of defining the boundaries of social collectivities (Bahrtdt 1997, 96). Looking at processes of communicating memories as moral practice is therefore one approach to analyze formation processes of group identities in further detail in future research. In other words, the values addressed in practices of moral education are those considered desirable for the social group referred to in that context (Reichertz 2010, 159). This shared knowledge includes questions of how to behave in order to acknowledge and respect certain experiences and achievements in the past within the family. Prominent examples in the study and presented in the findings chapter were the valuation of food, peace and those members of society who provided for it, including their commemoration. Moral educating thus indicates which values and norms should be valid and perpetuated, particularly in a changing and post-

scarcity and consumerist urban society. It levels intergenerational gaps of value orientations for the sake of familial harmony (Fowler/Fisher 2015, 210).

Some of these family memories that define the practice of moral educating refer to traumatic memories of human suffering, e.g. in the recollections of the experiences of hunger during and after the Second Indochina War. They usually have a more explicit connection to national history than positive stories about model family members. These shared memories of hardships and suffering during war times and post-war periods qualify as traumatic experiences and memories and deserve particular consideration from an ethical point of view. In his cultural sociological theorizations on trauma, Jeffrey Alexander (2012, 26) theorizes trauma as a sociological process of attribution "that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes the victim, attributes responsibility and distributes the ideal and material consequences." In the examples of memories of hunger, the experience of human suffering is usually personalized, presumably to strengthen the moral point on the speaker's behalf. Usually, memories of hunger and hardship convey stories of victimization and a state of helplessness in providing for the family. The endurance of human suffering is often framed as a personal sacrifice and includes the moral demand of repaying successors (*on*) by respecting and acknowledging this sacrifice (*hieu*) for the social good and well-being of future generations. The practice of moral education on the basis of traumatic experiences thus often comes with moral demands towards following generation that require intergenerational communication. Traumatic memories seem to even increase the significance of the Confucian value of moral debt (*on*) (Jamieson 1995, 16).

It is noteworthy that in the Vietnamese context, usually these memories of human suffering do not assign responsibility of that suffering to a certain actor as Alexander (2012, 26) suggested. The examples of moral education in the context of shared traumatic memories do usually not include moral demands towards a party that is considered responsible for the recalled pain. Although sometimes binary narratives in the context of (perpetuated) war memories occur in the form of "we" vs. "them" or "the enemies", (e.g. Yen, l. 134) these usually take the form of descriptions without moral demands of compensation. One explanation might be the public framing of war as a success story that diverts the focus on suffering during and after war time periods. In public memory in Vietnam, traumatic scenes are shown to defame the enemy and their cruel acts but rarely war as such. Own caused suffering is not part of dominant narratives of traumatic pasts (own field observations in war museums).

In public discourse, however, the compensation for war legacies for example in the form of support for the clearing of unexploded ordnances devices (UXO) and in dealing with consequences of the use of Agent Orange during the war are frequently covered (VNS 27.05.2020, 30.10.2020). These strands of public debate on moral and material compensation, however, have not been taken up by any of the respondents.

Besides the dominating narrative of the war as a victory, many informants also showed a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism, even if family members fought in the ARVN as in An's case (l. 28). This sense of nationalism also contributes to blur moral failures on the side of the DRV and hinders moral demands towards the ruling government. Such demands, of course, often also remain unarticulated publicly because these cannot be posed without criticizing or at least designating responsibility towards ruling authorities. In the interview data, such insatisfactories only surfaced indirectly and with great caution, for example when Van (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) talked about the felt disappointment of her father, who as a war veteran received only very little pension and recognition for his services to the nation in his life after war in Vietnam (see Van, l. 188). In her account, Van hinted at that state's moral failure to appropriately compensate those veterans who stood in for the propagated values during war time and those who actually beared the human suffering in service for the country. Another moral and political critique on the basis of human suffering could be found in Phu's (\*1975, Hanoi, DRV) recollection of his friend's father's social discrimination as well as An's (\*1990, HCMC, SRV) and Dan's (\*1954, Binh Thuan, SVN) father's "torture" (An, l. 167) and reeducation after unification due to their affiliation with the RVN regime. The moral lessons, respondents apparently take away from these familial memories is not to trust state institutions.

Although these examples of criticism named moral wrong-doings of the past they remained without demands for apologies or compensation in the interviews probably in order to avoid the articulation of dissent with the ruling government and/or out of confidence that these demands will not be accepted. It could be argued that without such moral demands, there is also no provided chance for forgiveness on the victims' side. As long as time witnesses of these (post-)war memories of suffering and moral failure after war live and represent a thread to hegemonial mnemonic discourses of the CPV, official critical revisiting of national history will remain unlikely. The constraints for open and critical communication about the past in an authoritarian one-party state thus hinders chances for open reconciliation and at the same time may erode trust in state institutions.

While the question of assigning responsibility with regard to traumatic memories in the empirical data of this study is mostly left open by respondents, Jeffrey Alexander (2004, 1) addresses a further dimension of ethics of remembering that could be narrowed down to the concept of empathy. He stated that in addressing the origins of trauma people show moral responsibility and "collectivities define their solidary relationships in ways that, in principle, allow them to share the sufferings of others." (ibid.) Empathy usually materializes in the interview data in the form of expressed solidarity with and gratitude for veterans, colleagues and/or family members who had suffered from the legacies of war. Empathy is expressed mostly in informants' description of intergenerational relations. Intragenerational solidarity in regard to trauma occurs less often in respondents' MCRs and usually indirectly in reference to others, e.g. in the case of Phong (\*1990, Dong Nai, SRV) whose parents gather regularly with friends and fellow veterans to reminisce their war experiences (Phong, l. 312). The empirical data also presented little data on empathy and solidarity in a trans- or international sense and thus with the suffering of other collectivities or war parties, including South Vietnamese or members of the Vietnamese diaspora. One exception was Tuan's (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV) account of an act of solidarity among his veteran colleagues who served for the Northern and Southern army to include the former ARVN service man into the commemoration practice on so-called Martyrs' Day, July 27th (Tuan, l. 167). Alexander's (2004, 1) notion of "share[ing] the suffering of others" comes close to Viet Thanh Nguyen's (2016, 71) concept of "ethics of recognizing self and others" as well as the inhumanities both experienced in times of war. These ethics of recognition oppose the idea of remembering only one's own (ibid.). That the empathy is usually addressed towards those who belong to a person's own family and/or veterans of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), who in official terms fought for the independence of the country, reflects the significance of kinship on the one hand and national sentiment of some on the other. This empathy for the suffering or "sacrifices" of others (previous generations) as it is often termed in the interviews thus expresses a form of solidarity with previous generations in the family and the country.

In a few cases, this empathy of suffering was inter- and intragenerational at once by generalizing the individual suffering of one's own family with the suffering of all people in the country at that time (e.g. Cat, l. 150). This solidarization and empathy in Cat's case is particularly interesting against her family background. She equalizes her family's own suffering, who was affiliated with the Southern regime, with the suffering of all Vietnamese after the war. This narrative smoothing of the experience of suffering creates discursive

solidarity and unity among Vietnamese with in her view similar or even same experiences of suffering and at the same time might be a narrative and social adjustment of memories in regard to her status and position in present-day Vietnam, in which she belongs to a new urban middle class.

### 7.2.1.2 *Norms of communicating memories interpersonally*

As a second normative dimension (2) principles of interpersonally communicating memories surfaced in the empirical findings. Such principles depend on the social role of the informant in a particular social group he or she identifies with.

In terms of family communication, respondents who understood themselves or answered in their role as a parent or grand-parent expressed clear ideas about what they want their children and grand-children to know or not to know about their own or their country's past. Leonhard (2002, 291) described these normative views as "perpetuation wishes" (*Tradierungswünsche*). In their function as elderly family members, many expressed the responsibility for morally educating the younger as previously discussed. In communicating memories, elderly apply and mediate these wishes to have an impact on the moral and social behavior of their offspring. Since that formulating and passing on moral messages, factual information and ritual knowledge is considered a core responsibility of parents and grandparents underlines again that seniority is one of the prime principles in communicating memories in Vietnam.

Principles in communicating memories further foregrounded in regard to traumatic and sensitive memories. While some respondents in their role as legal guardian generally reported that they would simply share everything, others differentiated to a greater extent in their response. For some memories that are considered politically or personally sensitive, e.g. considered "bad" war memories are intentionally not shared (e.g. Dan, l. 112; Tao, l. 256; Tuyet, l. 202). Politically sensitive in this sense usually means versions of memories that are deviant from dominant narratives as they are prevalent in the form of public memory. An outstanding example in this regard was Dan's (\*1954, Binh Thuan, State of Vietnam) way of communicating about the past with his grandchildren. While acknowledging that there are different existing versions of the past and that finding "truth" can be challenging in Vietnam, Dan does not share his own experiences but provides his grandchildren indirectly with certain keywords in order to let them search the web and form their own opinions (see Dan, l. 110). By circumventing interpersonal communication on politically and personally sensitive memories and "outsourcing" them to the Internet, Dan also protects his family from possible social clashes.

Often times, however, the elder respondents also insinuate younger family members of not actually being interested in the past and therefore do not see the need in sharing certain memories, particularly their historical embeddedness. This negative (grand-)parental judgement on the lacking interest of youngsters serves to explain intergenerational communication gaps. Legitimizations for intergenerational silences were also found in family memories on Nazi Germany (Leonhard 2002, 299). In these cases, elders denied having a responsibility for addressing sensitive memories and thus legitimized the silencing uncomfortable pasts.

Younger informants on the other hand did also address certain principles in communicating about memories with elder family members. The taught respect, *filial piety (bien) and moral debt (on)* towards the elderly includes behavioral codes that secure the comfortability of the elder in the process of communication. In order to behave respectfully, younger family members need to secure the comfort zone of the elderly. In consequence, younger family members are traditionally not supposed to openly disagree or ask uncomfortable questions. Hesitations in intergenerational familial communication to speak about contentious memories on the side of younger respondents have also been observed in Western cultures (Leonhard 2002, 299). A few of the younger respondents confirmed such norms that limit the scope of mnemonic communication in their family (e.g. Quynh, l. 95) while others reported on more openness in talking about topics on the past (e.g. Trung, l. 284; An, l. 163). The degree of strict adherence to such principles of respect and thus the *openness* of family communication in these cases seems to depend on the traditionality of the family and the conformity of familial narratives with publicly dominating ones. The different cases indicate that in Vietnam's urban centres, there is a range in families in the way they adhere to traditional Confucian values. We can further assume that families who share critical or deviant views about public memory in Vietnam cultivate a more open culture of family communication. The way of education and socialization within the family therefore seems to have an ultimate effect on the transparency of communicating memories in the family (Leonhard 2002, 291). Elderly family members therefore do not only determine which value orientations and norms are perpetuated, they also decide on the degree of openness of family communication. Prior research showed that this rate of openness also affects the way other MCPs evolve (Kroogsgard 2017; Finger 2017). The *principle of seniority* in communicating memories that reflects social hierarchies in the family therefore requires more attention in future research.

The empirical study on Vietnam showed that perpetuating norms and values through communicating memories to secure continuity and unity within the family does not necessarily equal consent with presently upheld values in society. An's (\*1990, HCMC, SRV) family serves as an example for this dynamic. While in his family positive or even nostalgic memories of pre-1975 Saigon are held up across generations with the impression that "people were more civilized" (An, l. 77) back then, the communist government has always denounced bourgeois lifestyles in the RVN as capitalist, imperialist and feudal (Taylor 2001, 32). The continuity of value concepts through memories of pre-1975 Saigon thus creates continuity within a family that had to tackle vast changes after unification. This continuity within the family may actually present a strategy to cope with experienced social austerity and transformation and at the same time dissociate from the persisting communist regime and the values it stands for. The the values represented through memories, the norms of communicating memories within the family and thus the degree of openness towards contentious memories play into family life but also into the relationship between the state and its citizens.

Normative principles further surfaced in informants' *expressed obligations* to remember or not to forget. These are not confined to family communication but reach beyond kinship. Such obligations are expressed with regard to ancestors and achievements or sacrifices of elder members of society in general. The intensity of this obligation is culturally strengthened through the principle of moral debt in Vietnamese society. These felt obligations thus refer in most cases to intergenerational remembering with younger people honoring and preserving the elders' legacies. The empirical data presents several examples of felt obligation to remember war veterans (e.g. Quynh, Hoa, Ha). This duty to commemorate veterans was mostly expressed towards PAVN veterans. A lot of the informants did not differentiate between different groups of veterans. Furthermore, the interview material did not elicit an explicit obligation or call to remember ARVN soldiers and thus is indicative of prevailing inequalities in collective remembering of war veterans in Vietnam. The neglect of public remembering of ARVN soldiers is also mirrored in the marginalized presence in the MCRs of the respondents in this study. Intergenerational obligations not to forget have been discussed in Western academic contexts and post-conflict societies, e.g. with regard to collective guilt in German society (Leonhard 2002, 20). The question of guilt or regret on the own side with regard to the war and its casualties is not openly discussed in Vietnamese public and also not brought up explicitly in the interviews of this study.

Since a majority of respondents worked in the public service sector, the norms linked to their professional social role also affected the way of communicating memories. As employee of a state institution or cadres of the CPV, certain gestures are expected or regarded as part of the *professional duty*. We have seen such examples in the empirical data in the form of excursions with colleagues to historical sights or commemoration practices on institutionalized commemorative days initiated by the state. The latter e.g. includes donations or other expressions of acknowledgement towards veterans on Martyr's Day (e.g. Ha, l. 264; Duy, l. 173). That day is not a public holiday, yet seemed to have more meaning and impact to those informants whose professional role and environment encouraged the commemoration. Sometimes this professional role would coincide with a familial or peer role and would consequently strengthen the meaning of that day and the commemorative acts of communication connected to it. This obligation coincides only with the familial role when a veteran is part of the family (e.g. Linh, l. 219).

The professional role does not only include employees, but can also be applied to the role and identity of a student. All of the third-generation respondents were enrolled as students at a higher education institution at the time of the interviews. A few of them were organized in university clubs and showed a high identification with their university. Within these institutionalized structures they also took on certain responsibilities in organizing events. These students (with high loyalty to and extracurricular engagement at the university) seemed more likely to take part or be interested in university-organized memory work such as volunteer work at historical sights (e.g. Nhung; Quynh; Hoa). In this sense, communicating memories underlies the norms of acting as a model student.

While students can decide on whether they want to take part in voluntary action related to institutionalized memory work, they cannot decide on the historical education they receive during their studies. Party history and HCM thought is part of the academic curricula in public schools and universities with the aim to educate students ideologically and morally (Doan 2005, 454-462). Usually respondents perceived their history education as a highly normed environment. Many younger informants recalled their history education in negative terms as boring, forced and unfavorable subject (e.g. Hai, l. 49; Phuc, l. 384). Interestingly enough, the preference for history as a subject does usually not correspond to the belief in national idols such as Ho Chi Minh. Admiration for national heroes and the values they represent therefore do not depend on thematic interest in history.

Although students perceived the history education at school as a highly standardized environment, some teachers and/or university lectures took chance in communicating

alternate views on history and thus broke with the norms of state history education as some of the interviewees reported (e.g. Kim, l. 25; Nhung, l. 107). These reports on deviant narratives in teaching in the empirical data that led some of the informants to gain alternate views on history showed that working as a state servant does not necessarily guarantee that they also carry out state-compliant memory work. Hence, professional roles in the public sector also do leave space for individual thinking about the past that diverges from or adds to official narratives. The high trust, students take in their teachers as experts and time witnesses again underscores the importance of the seniority principles characteristic for the teacher-student relationship in Vietnam (Tran et al. 2014, 95).

Besides familial and professional norms, peer and mnemonic groups present further social contexts of communicating memories. Usually peer groups form on the basis of common lived experiences and shared memories while mnemonic groups share a particular mnemonic interest (7.1.2.2-3). Peer groups also establish norms to sustain their social bonds. Usually the main norm of mnemonic groups is to constantly revitalize memories. Regular meetings are established in order to share and relive common memories in interpersonal face-to-face communication. Huong's (\*1959, Thua Thien-Hue, RVN) annual meetings with her cohort of Vietnamese exchange students to Russia is one such example. The norm of communicatively exchanging memories in her group extended to the Web 2.0 with the arrival of the Internet in Vietnam. In their Facebook group, members of Huong's mnemonic group coordinate the face-to-face meetings of the group, share visual memories in the form of digitized photographs and chat. Despite taking advantage of the affordances of the new media technology, the example of Huong's mnemonic group show that offline-meetings yet still belong to the norms of the group and have not been discarded. Social media communication in this case facilitates the adherence to pre-existing norms of the group.

Mnemonic groups appear to be less regulated spaces with little pre-conditions for entering a group apart from a common interest in particular collective pasts. As a member of the closed Facebook group *Dan Saigon Xua* ("The old people of Saigon"), An (\*1990, HCMC, SRV) did not refer to any specific rules or demands regarding his activities in the group. In fact, his interactions with the social media group were confined to appropriate the posted texts and primarily visuals (digitized photographs of pre-1975 Saigon) of other group members without actually chatting with them. An's account implies that he takes on the role of an observer rather than an active member with own posts in the group. Based on An's described activities and later my own membership in the group, it becomes apparent

that there exists no norm of active involvement within the mnemonic group. Given my own acceptance as a member of the group, nationality and cultural background are also no precondition of membership. The only common rule seems to be an interest in the history of urban life in Saigon before unification and apparently it is enough to show this interest by sending an online request to join the group. From An's account and my own experience with the group, it can be assumed that normative expectations within the online mnemonic group are low and the intensity of social bonds between group members largely depend on their own involvement and interaction with other group members. The existence of loose and low-threshold norms leave group boundaries and thus the group's identity less distinct. The two examples of mnemonic groups online and offline show that the degree of social cohesion on the basis of communicating memories differs with the scope, specificity, history, endurance and adherence to existing norms among group members. To trace group norms through qualitative interviewing is quite limited and future research would require a more in-depth and longterm analysis of such groups for clearer results.

#### **7.2.1.3 Normative views on public memory**

A third dimension of normativity that relates to the ethics of collective remembering comprises (3) respondents' normative views on particular forms of public memory as they encounter it in their everyday lives in public spaces or the media. These normative views can be considered as individual opinions on public communicative forms of communicating memories. Since I have already discussed views on state media at length (see 6.1.2; 7.1.1.1), this subchapter focuses on history education and considered national heritage. This includes normative views on forms of public memory that are not part of people's MCRs.

The majority of informants were quite critical about history education in Vietnam. While a few comments referred to the perceived bias in historical content (e.g. Trung, l. 358), most criticism aimed at the didactics of teaching. It has to be acknowledged that the latter is also a less risky, more legitimate and acceptable type of criticism because criticizing content may easily coincide with criticizing the party line. The criticism on didactics usually referred to a lack of illustrations and media (e.g. Thu, l. 175; Tuyet, l. 205), the communication and teaching skills of the teacher and the learning and testing of hard facts. One respondent complained about lacking references to contemporary life and society in history lessons (Binh, l. 238). Other informants referred to a general dislike of the subject and personal shortcoming of memorizing history (e.g. Hoa, l. 115).

Normative views on national heritage provide further information on people's conception on the values of collective pasts as well as their stance towards and identification with mnemonic practices of state institutions. These opinions therefore refer to the macro level of communicating memories. Various types of traditional folk music that can be considered orally perpetuated forms of cultural memory in the Assmanns' sense (1994), for example, were often considered part of cultural heritage in Vietnam but not necessarily personally liked or listened to. While for several interviewees folk music was not an integral part of their MCRs, most of them had encountered types of it either through random media use, public cultural events or other family members' media use. Disliking a certain type of folk music, however, did not necessarily mean that the particular informant would deny its status as national heritage. These cases of diverging preference in reception and opinion on its national and cultural value (e.g. Duong, l. 72; An, l. 188) show that the question of national heritage is not necessarily a matter of personal interest and media consumption. The considered traditionality, rarity and thus specialty of these various types of folk music are in those cases reasons for endorsing their status as heritage.

Apart from folk music, some informants considered village architecture or spiritual sites such as temples and pagodas as heritage. There was no consensus on village architecture belonging to national heritage, however. While some respondents endorsed preservation policies of villages and valued the typicality of their architecture (e.g. Cuong, l. 94; Lan, l. 23; Kiet, l. 108), others conceived their existence as nothing special (e.g. Hau, l. 177; Mai, l. 238). The experience of urban life and connected personal memories with the Northern countryside seem to affect a person's stance towards the value of village culture in the form of architecture. However, no clear pattern regarding to age and origin surfaced in the range of these opinions.

Apart from *Tet*, the celebration of specific cultural festivals as national heritage played a minor role in the daily lives of urban middle-class respondents. Although cultural festivals such as the Hung King festival in Phu Tho, the Buffalo Fights festival at Hai Phong or the *Ba Chua Xu* festival at Chau Doc (Do 2008) were known (e.g. Huong, l. 20; Nguyen, l. 139-143; Hung, l. 79), only a minority of informants reported recent, active participation. The revival and popularity of festivals over the last years in Vietnam (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433; Jellema 2007) does not reflect in the responses and practices of Vietnamese urbanites. According to the data, their celebration does not appear as significant in urban everyday life.

This brief review of normative views beyond state media provides further context on people's opinions about and relations to national history. We have seen that for history education it is not only the content or historiography that matters, but also the style of teaching, presenting and studying. Opinions about national heritage teach us about societal value orientations beyond the family when engaging with collective pasts. The data also showed that national heritage can be valued without being a stable element of someone's MCR.

The three normative dimensions — moral educating, norms of communicating memories interpersonally and opinions about public memory — tells us more explicitly about the values people express, negotiate and would like to perpetuate in society by communicating about collective pasts. These incorporated value orientations and the norms that regulate how to apply them in everyday life seek to steer social action and behavior. Exploring communicating memories further on that normative level will provide further insights on what kind of society people actually desire to live in.

### 7.2.2 Ethics of communicating memories: moral responsibility

The normative implications the empirical data contribute to broader academic discussions on the ethics of collective remembering (Thompson 2009; Nguyen 2016) particularly in post-conflict societies. So far communication scholars devoted little attention to people's normative views and ethics in communicating about collective pasts. Janna Thompson (2009, 195) developed a definition of "ethics of memory" that serves as the basis for discussing ethics of communicating memories in Vietnam.

The ethics of memory is about what individuals or groups ought to remember or forget, what they ought to do to enable this remembering and forgetting and how they ought to respond to demands arising from memory. (Thompson 2009, 195)

The previous subchapter showed that the question of what people ought to remember is answered differently by respondents depending on the subject (e.g. war memory, family memory), the considered relevance and identification with certain mnemonic causes, inherent value orientations as well as the adherence to existing norms in particular social contexts. Thompson's (2009, 195) general definition of an ethics of memory addresses three dimensions that also touch upon the empirical work of this study: (1) at content level (what to remember?), (2) at practice level (how to enable remembering/forgetting?) and (3) intergenerational, historical obligations ("demands arising from memory"). All three dimensions refer to implicit or explicit normative views of respondents in the study.

### 7.2.2.1 *Subjects: What people ought to remember*

The first dimension basically addresses the content layer of the empirical study — the question of "what to remember?". What ought to be remembered depends on the point of perspective of certain actors or memory agents. Thompson's (2009, 195) general definition leaves open whose perspective on "[...] what individuals or groups ought to remember or forget [...]" is addressed. In the context of this study, the individual, his or her views and practices are the centre of attention. The question from this point of view would therefore translate into what are the historical issues and themes individuals' consider important and preservable or not? From a communications ethics perspective, this question may be specified to what are the topics that ought to be talked about or need to be part of a mnemonic media agenda and the public sphere?

The previous chapter revealed that positive stories about ancestors, stories of hardship and knowledge about rituals qualify as prominent topics of mnemonic family communication (7.1.2.1). Peers often reminisce about commonly experienced live events that strongly depend on their autobiographies including life in the RVN or war experiences. Mnemonic groups foregrounded special interest topics such as folk songs, pre-1975 Saigon or war time. These subjects are entailed to people's MCPs and therefore reflect informants' opinions on what should be remembered. This diversity of topics and dependence on group contexts, however, hardly streamlines into what could be considered a general ethics of communicating memories. Despite some thematic overlap, the range and depth of topics in the empirical data complicates any analytical endeavour to identify widely shared themes on what ought to be remembered or not.

What we actually can filter from the normative views of respondents, however, are their expectations towards the nature of public mnemonic content and the way it is represented and consumed. It is their views on what a broader population should know and how it should be communicated. The reference to an assumed more general public allows for conclusions on more general values and norms of communicating memories. Such expectations on the nature of public mnemonic content exist also beyond specific topics.

They surface most clearly in critical statements about collective and public remembering in Vietnam. In these critical statements, we find at least partly shared *expectations of completeness, plurality (including shift of focus) and truth* regarding public mnemonic content. It is noteworthy that these expectations towards publicly mediated memory basically match aspired journalistic standards in Western democratic societies. Although the media system in Vietnam underlies state control, differing rules and sometimes professional ideologies (see

4.1), the Vietnamese middle-class respondents expect mnemonic media content to fulfill standards that are considered typical liberal media systems. At the same time, these expectations correspond to some of the Habermasian "validity claims" of communication as deliberate discourse (Habermas 1984, 23). These include plurality in the way that every party involved should have a say and the sincerity of what is being said (truth-claim) (ibid., Averbek-Lietz 2015).

The expected *completeness of information* usually arises from a critique on or diagnosis of lacking attention for particular actors as the Nhan Van Giai Pham collective (e.g. Kim, l. 107; Zinoman 2016) or particular topics such as the Sino-Vietnamese border war in 1979 (e.g. Luan, l. 142; Binh, l. 165; Hai, 139). While no one can ever know all about certain pasts as Tamotsu Shibutani (1966, 159) reminded us that the knowledge about intentional public omissions lies at the root of the demand for completeness. Completeness in this sense is thus not to be understood as a claim for appropriating all possible knowledge about a certain historical topic, but for potentially having public access to certain knowledge.

In terms of *plurality*, one respondent e.g. criticized that history in Vietnam only focuses on positive aspects (Trung, l. 358). Kim noticed the lack of information on the history of South Vietnam and South Vietnamese views on Vietnamese (cultural) history (l.105). Incorporated in expectations of completeness and plurality some respondents wished for a change of focus in public mnemonic content. In the context of war memories, there was e.g. a wish for a shift in coverage away from a deadly, conflictuous past and away from the ever same figures to other topics and personalities (e.g. Kim, l. 101; Thuy, l. 63 Hung, l. 137). The wish for a shift in the prominence of topics and figures derives from a perceived preoccupation of collective public remembering with particular figures, periods and events in history. In this sense, it does not only stand for a demand for remembering neglected characters or topics in history, but also vice versa for forgetting prominent ones to some extent. The expectations of completeness and plurality in these examples are closely related to another and their boundaries are not always clear-cut. We can generally note, however, that completeness refers to a range of topics and events, intentional omissions or taboos while plurality focuses on the diversity of perspectives on the same topic.

Beside expectations for completeness and plurality, a few interviewees (e.g. Dan, l. 112, Tuan, l. 129) articulated a *claim for truth*. These truth-claims, however, remain rather indirect without an explicit naming of an addressee or pointing out responsables. These views or truth-claims are not uniform among interviewees.

The mere existence of such expectations often in response to dominant representations in public memory show that there are perceived asymmetries of knowledge about the past between (groups of) individuals' and state-institutionalized public memory. They prove some respondents' awareness about biases and distortions in public memory in Vietnam. While these expectations exist, they cannot be expressed openly or publicly in many cases due to authoritarian rule in Vietnam.

### *7.2.2.2 Practices and Measures: Enabling remembering and forgetting*

Authoritarianism in Vietnam (London 2014; Vasavakul 2014) is a highly relevant aspect for discussing the second dimension of Thompson's (2009, 195) definition: "[...] what they ought to do to enable this remembering and forgetting [...]" (ibid.). This second dimension refers to the practice level of communicating memories. What kind of actions are necessary and appropriate to remember and forget? Previously, I formulated respondents' expectations towards public memory. How can these be met?

While we can assume that respondents would consider their own MCPs as righteous and appropriate, the normative expectations of completeness, plurality and truth addressing media practices of state actors also motivate their own actions. These expectations reflect people's visions of moral accountability in communicating memories deviant from the state's. Looking at these moral expectations, it becomes apparent that their fulfilment would require a change of media policies and agendas in order to make people with more critical views on public remembering feel more thoroughly informed. That does not only address the producers of mass-mediated informative content such as historic movies and TV series or the political bodies involved in their streaming and distribution, but also historians and authors of school textbooks as memory agents. That means that on the side of critical respondents from the educated urban middle class in Vietnam there exist expectations on the objectivity and fairness (completeness, plurality and truth) in representing historical or mnemonic content in a wider sense (e.g. Trung, Dan, Binh, Tuan, Hung, Thuy). Because least respondents possess the capacities or power to act on public state media on a content level (exceptions are Duy, Kim, Cuong) and thus take influence on media agendas, they alter their own media practices in accordance with their moral standpoints. If those who expect objectivity in the sense of plurality and instead find biased information through "negotiating practices" (6.2.2) they are likely to alter their own "informing practices" (see 6.2.1.1) by turning to alternative media products or personal sources that align with their understanding of morality in remembering. Sometimes that results in a switch between public spheres, e.g. from a national to a transnational diasporic

public sphere (see e.g. Dan, An). Thus discrepancies in the morality of remembering among various memory agents can alter and change mnemonic communication practices and the participation in public spheres in which such media practices are realized. This would also partly explain Hue Tam Ho Tai's diagnosis of amnesia in the wake of a "hypermnemosis" (Tai 2001b, 8). People may turn away from biased and ideologically charged public representations of collective memory because they fail to match with own personal values, norms and expectations of collective remembering. Resignating and turning away from state-controlled content might be one major consequence in meeting the moral expectations in authoritarian settings where power is limited and "contesting practices" (see subchapter 6.2.3) risky. Resignation, a perceived lack of capacity for change and sanctions on criticism despite other pressing issues of everyday life such as career-building might also turn into a de-politicization of perceptions of public memory. This kind of resignation from public mnemonic content may be a more or less conscious decision. Seeking completeness and plurality in the state's way of communicating memories publicly can also lead to activist practices (e.g. Kim).

Activism can therefore function as a strategy to enable people to remember aside from the mainstream within authoritarian or restrictive settings. Altering MCPs and sources, resignation and activism are thus three major ways of realizing remembering and forgetting in accordance with people's moral expectations towards public mnemonic content.

### **7.2.2.3 Moral demands**

The third dimension of Thompson's (2009, 195) definition deals with questions of moral responsibility for and obligations that arise from legacies of the past. In this context, Thompson (2009, 196) discusses the existence and legitimacy of historical obligations in remembering. The issue at stake is an obligation and moral responsibility that exceeds single generations and does not require lived experience or witnessing as the basis for a duty to remember. In her framework, Thompson (2009) argues that historical obligations for citizens as members of a society do exist due to a communal identity that is not only based on the consensus on "abstract values" (ibid., 204), but even more so on "the attachment to a group in which members conceive of themselves as participating in relationships of intergenerational cooperation." (ibid., 204) If we combine this thought with Ricoeur's (2004, 142) understanding of mnemonic duty as an obligation to do justice to someone else by remembering, we can argue that the social relation to this "someone" is decisive and that this social relation requires a communal identity at a certain level, e.g. familial or national, for being sustainable. Margalit (2002, 8) spoke of "thick relations" in

this context. That means if people identify with a certain social group or entity they will also articulate demands or feel the obligation to remember because they want to do justice to those who they belong to or feel they owe to. The question of "how they ought to respond to demands arising from memory" (Thompson 2009, 195) thus depends more specifically on the mnemonic agents and social relationships (within and across social groups) we are scrutinizing as researchers.

As I have discussed previously, practices and social relations underlie different value concepts and norms that must be accounted for when elaborating on duties of remembering. Doan (2005, 459) differentiated two moral systems in Vietnam: "traditional morality and socialist morality" (ibid.). While "traditional morality" relies mainly on Confucianism that secures social order by defining clear and hierarchical "principles of human relations, both in the family and society at large" (ibid.) and is taught through family and religious institutions (ibid., 451), socialist morality "emphasises the responsibility of the individual towards the nation as a socialist society" (ibid., 461). The latter is institutionalized by educational law and thus educational curricula (Doan 2005, 454). Both concepts of morality, traditional and socialist, strengthen the idea of obligations and respect towards family, teachers and elderly as well as to the nation. These concepts of morality depend on individuals' social roles in society and life stage. When we discuss ethics of remembering, norms, value orientations and expectations thus clearly depend on the social relation of interest. The empirical findings proved the relations of children, parents and grandparents, of student and teacher, of lay and witness, of living and dead as well as of citizen and the nation of greatest importance in communicating memories. Therefore these are also the social roles and relations of interest when discussing the implications for ethics of remembering in Vietnamese society.

#### *Commemorating and moral demands of the dead*

One clear and repeatedly articulated moral demand in the interviews affects intergenerational relationships. That is the demand of not forgetting the achievements of elder generations in Vietnamese society. Usually elder respondents posed this demand and address it to the younger (e.g. Huong, l. 180; Hang, l. 150-156; Hop, l. 137). Often this demand occurs in reference to war memories in comparison to contemporary life in a peaceful and prosperous society. This inter- or transgenerational demand asks the successors of respondents to remember their origins in the wake of a changing, for some prospering, society that provides various commodities of a modern and consumerist world. These commodities and arising opportunities for present young middle-class Vietnamese

are often thought of being the result of sacrifices of predecessors not only of the family but in society as a whole. In most cases within the empirical data this demand for commemorating sacrifices referred to revolutionaries and thus closely aligns with socialist ideology and CPV memory politics. The historical and moral obligation in this sense is not only connected to the demand for commemorating familial ancestors or the dead, but also to considered martyrs and heroes. In commemorating them, people thus do not only praise them and their efforts, but also show respect and gratitude for their contributions to present life. In this sense, the concept of historical obligation fits both, traditional values such as moral debt (*on*) and filial piety (*hiên*) as well as socialist morality in Vietnamese society that channels the attention towards "national heroes and revolutionary soldiers" (Doan 2005, 461). This overlap of traditional values mostly appropriated through family education and the community (*ibid.*, 460) and socialist values that have been first introduced to school curricular under Ho Chi Minh in the DRV in 1956 (Dror 2018, 69) strengthen a felt obligation to remember in younger generations, notably in those families socialized under communism. This demand and expressed a felt obligation arising from the demands of the elders is perpetuated across the generations.

Given the overlap of prevailing traditional and socialist moral concepts in Vietnam, it cannot always be discerned in the empirical data whether this expressed felt obligation in collective remembering is regarded a familial, communal or national duty. On the other hand, if there is a clash at one of these levels, duties might generally be perceived differently. It is very unlikely for example that someone who does not identify with socialist values (even though appropriated in school) would feel the duty to remember revolutionary soldiers, particularly if the family background is non-revolutionary. We have seen that e.g. in the visual elicitation findings when especially younger respondents did not consider Martyr's Day an important day.

Despite family backgrounds, another reason for dwindling interest in meeting the moral demands of the state in a socialist manner can be an actual shift of values in Vietnamese transitioning society, particularly regarding urban lifestyles. In the context of moral education in schools, Doan (2005, 458) noted that "higher education students are not really convinced that those subjects are necessary for their intellectual and moral development" and that "they easily find the principles and ideologies taught in classroom are contradictory to what they experience in real life." (*ibid.*) This impression describes perceived widening discrepancies between socialist ideology and urban lifeworlds in 21st-century Vietnam. Doan (2005, 457-458) holds these perceived discrepancies among the

young educated population in Vietnam accountable for the great demands and numbers of students studying abroad in order to circumvent the unpopular, but emphasized political subjects that e.g. make up 12% of credits in the undergraduate curriculum (ibid., 457). These discrepancies in value orientations might as well affect ethics of communicating memories in Vietnam.

Yet, for some of the younger respondents historical obligations persist to play a role in the everyday. A felt or inherited obligation in the sense of owing to remember across generations has also been an issue in Ricoeur's (2004) philosophy of remembering and forgetting. The French philosopher stated:

The idea of guilt is inseparable from that of inheritance. We are guilty to those who have gone before us with a part of what we are. The duty of remembrance is not limited to preserving the material – written or otherwise – trace of past events, but includes the feeling of being indebted to these others, of whom we shall say in the following that they are no more, but have been. (Ricoeur 2004, 142-143)

In this writing, Ricoeur (ibid.) does not only regard the duty to remember in actions of e.g. preservation, but in the affect of actually feeling obliged towards deceased predecessors. Ricoeur (2004) does not define the specific social relation or its quality in this quote, but it becomes clear that he addresses the moral relations of the living and the dead. As Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016, 27) pointed out in reference to Margalit's (2002, 8) "thick relations", however, not all dead, including their moral demands, are treated or remembered equally: "The need to remember the dead properly extends to all those whom we consider kin, by blood, affiliation, identification, community, sympathy and empathy." (ibid.) In his view, the duty to remember in the sense of Ricoeur (2004), namely as an affect, grounds on a "natural affinity" is what makes the "ethics of remembering one's own" so powerful, as "its capacity [to] draw[s] from our emotions and [to] stimulate[s] feelings [...]" (Nguyen 2016, 27). As it draws from emotions that are in many cases felt naturally, they also often go unquestioned and thus generate "loyalty to those we remember" (ibid., 28) and feel close to. When remembering the dead from an ethical point of view, we may discern in the context of this study between the familial level and the dead as familial ancestors, the cultural(-political) level and the dead as spiritual ancient ancestors (e.g. Hung Kings) and the socio-political level with the dead as victims of violent conflicts of the past and how post-society deals with them.

When we think about the tradition of ancestor worship in Vietnam (see 4.2.2, 6.2.1.4), then some of these intergenerational moral demands of family members of preceding generations are presumed by the living successors and, according to tradition, met by

various rituals such as incense burning, the offering of food and votive objects. These mnemonic obligations towards the dead are thus met by ritualized spiritual commemorating practices for ancestors, but also by including memories of them into (daily) family conversations (see 7.1.2.1). Both types of commemorating involve communication, first with the dead and second, about the dead. The first type of commemorating and thus spiritual ancestor rituals can be as previously argued understood as a kind of communication between the living and the dead across worlds. Exercising these rituals underlies also certain institutionalized norms, usually appropriated in the family or community context, that are relevant for ethics of communicating memories. Thinking of ethics of remembering from a communications perspective therefore needs to include the ways of communication with ancestors and the dead. So far, this has only been the case in communication studies on mourning (e.g. Offerhaus 2016; Thimm/Nehls 2017) but more so in the context of individuals' coping with personal losses. From an ethical point of view, we can assume that talking about ancestors respectfully would equal commemorating them positively in their conversations.

The cultural(-political) level refers to felt obligations or identification with ancient ancestors such as the Hung Kings. As we have learned from prior historical and anthropological research, the beliefs in founding myths of the country and tutelary spirits have a long tradition in Vietnam (see 4.2.1). These beliefs create a sentiment of belonging that is not based on experienced physical social interaction with the deceased or mythical figures as it is often the case at familial level. The worship of these ancient ancestors is also encouraged politically through established national holidays and also public cultural and spiritual festivals that regained in popularity (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007, 433; Jellema 2007). We need to acknowledge that in this example memory politics intersect with cultural traditions and social life. In the empirical data of this study, however, the Hung Kings as ancient ancestors or other considered tutelary spirits played a less important role as compared to familial ancestor worship in the daily lives of respondents. We can therefore assume that their mythical character does not provide the emotional basis or affinity as familial ancestors do. As a result, most urban respondents, especially younger ones, felt less obliged to commemorate these ancient ancestors.

At the socio-political level, moral demands of the dead arise from their role in violent conflict on the one hand, but also from the memory politics exercised on them on the other hand. Ricoeur (2004, 143) further specifies that among those we owe to remember

victims enjoy moral priority. For post-conflict societies, Blustein (2014, 5) similarly sees a historical obligation in commemorating the victims and the dead of previous conflicts.

On a collective level, in societies with recent histories of massive and systematic wrongdoing, audiences are enjoined, as a matter of duty or obligation, to remember the events and honor the victims and to establish memorials to keep their memory alive. [...] This is partly simply to honor and pay tribute to those who suffered and died. (Blustein 2014, 5)

While every dead in violent conflict may be considered a victim for losing their lives, the perception of who is a victim and who is a martyr or a hero largely depends on the memory politics of those in power in a post-conflict society. Nguyen (2016, 28) noted in the Vietnamese context that since the dead soldiers cannot speak on their own behalf — the way they are remembered is largely determined by the living "generals and statesmen" and their narratives.

In previous research on post-conflict memory politics in Vietnam (see 4.2.1), we have seen that the commemoration of "those who suffered and died" (Blustein 2014, 5) in public life is largely determined by state policies and one-sided with a sole focus on revolutionaries (Großheim 2016). Concerning the victims of violent conflict, there are strong inequalities in their public commemoration in Vietnam. Nguyen (2016, 24) considers so-called martyr cemeteries exemplary for such injustices in honoring the dead, describing them as "the most visible and brooding reminders in this country of the ethics of remembering one's own." In private commemoration, these inequalities can similarly remain along ideological lines or kinship, when only the victims of one's own side are being remembered and if there is only little or no reflection on one's own side's moral wrong-doings. Such a reflection would also require empathy with the conflicting side. That would mean not only intergenerational empathy for the suffering of others (Alexander 2004, 1), but also with contemporaries who or whose families might have been considered former enemies. That would include respecting the moral demands and thus the same treatment of the dead on every side. From current research on the commemoration of fallen soldiers in particular (Nguyen 2016; Großheim 2016), we know that official commemoration ceremonies by state institutions are devoted to revolutionary soldiers only. Places for mourning are separated and former ARVN cemeteries neglected and even vandalized (Nguyen 2016, 37). Families in Vietnam but also in the diaspora of Vietnamese refugees each commemorate their own dead and apply an "ethics of remembering their own" (ibid., 36-40). These examples show that people's empathy for the suffering of the victims is still very much based on kinship, comradeship, ideology and shared experience. This dynamic, however, limits the interaction and empathy with other groups or considered former enemies who

also suffered in conflicts. An "ethics of remembering one's own" (ibid., 24) may actually hinder true reconciliation among the living.

While the previous discussion had a stronger focus on soldiers as victims of war, it needs to be kept in mind that among those who lost their lives during times of violent conflict in Vietnam and the exodus afterwards are also many civilians. Until today, the legacies of war in Vietnam cause deaths due to the long-term effects of the use of Agent Orange (AO) and accidents through unexploded ordnances (UXO). While the permanent exhibition in Ho Chi Minh City's War Remnants Museum pays attention to the victims of AO, no public tribute is paid to the victims of UXO, e.g. in Quang Tri (Nguyen 2016, 25). There are also no records or documented numbers of those who lost their lives at sea in the attempt to escape after the RVN fell (Cargill/Huynh 2000, 4). The commemoration of other civilian victims did also not surface explicitly in the interview data. That underscores the impression that remembering not necessarily kin-related civilian dead still remains in the hands of smaller local initiatives (Kwon 2006).

#### *Historical obligations and moral demands among the living*

However, the inter- and overgenerational moral demand discussed here does not solely concern the relation of the living and the dead, but also relations among the living. Among the victims of conflicts are not only dead, but also survivors and those who suffered and experienced trauma during war and post-war years in Vietnam. The moral demands and obligations can be discussed here with a timely focus as a question of responsibility for remembering between different generational groups over time; and with a socio-political focus as a question of the relation of different interest groups in memory at a certain point in time.

Regarding the timely focus, we have seen that elder generations, who witnessed and/or experienced suffering or stories of suffering, pose moral demands towards the younger. It requires communicative perpetuation of memories in order to place these demands and to know how to meet them. If the knowledge on values, duties and fulfillment of remembering is not perpetuated among the living, young members of society would not be aware about which moral demands arise from the dead. We have seen that there are various social contexts that play a role in this perpetuation, particularly the family and school context (see also Doan 2005, 460). It therefore hints at the importance of intergenerational responsibility and cooperation in the sense of Thompson (2009) also across living generational groups in society.

While this intergenerational duty in Thompson's (2009, 207) sense is understood for the sake and good of one's own group, it says little about empathy or responsibilities for other social groups and parties. Particularly, in conflict-ridden societies, however, moral demands arise from different or even conflicting parties and do not only require a response over time and intergenerationally, but also across different groups.

Such moral demands for being remembered among living groups is crucial within the diaspora of Vietnamese refugees. Their demand for remembrance is the result of a politics of forgetting not only in Vietnam (Tai 2001c, 182), but also in their host countries such as the United States (Nguyen 2016, 9). A particularly important group among them is the one of war veterans or ARVN soldiers, whose voices are marginalized in the broader historiography of the 2nd Indochina War (Nguyen 2013, 698). The only public representation of ARVN soldiers to this day is a statue in Southern California's Little Saigon, initiated and erected by the southern Vietnamese community there (personal visit, November 2017). Some US scholars have addressed this neglect in remembering Vietnamese refugees in their host countries and devoted publications to Vietnamese survivors' own views, stories and testimonies (e.g. Cargill/Huynh 2000). While all of the accounts included the description of traumatic memories of the authors or family members in the post-war era, including memories of suffering due to reeducation, social discrimination, violence and control, poverty and lack of future perspective in Vietnam, the autobiographical essays in Cargill and Huynh's (2000) collection do not voice moral demands towards those they consider responsible for their suffering. The only exception is Khon Luu's (2000) account, which assigns the moral responsibility of suffering during and after the Second Indochina War to US policymakers. Luu (2000, 166), the grandson of Chinese immigrants to Vietnam and former sergeant in the South Vietnamese Airforce recalled:

The Americans had pulled out, leaving the South to dangle in front of the tigers. It was inconceivable why they had gotten involved in the first place, only to pull out before they finished. I guess I don't blame America or the soldiers who came to Vietnam. I blame the policymakers who didn't know Vietnam in the first place and then didn't stick with what they started. They were just playing politics. (Luu 200, 166)

Other members of the Vietnamese refugee diaspora published their own autobiographical books with their memories of Vietnam, escape and resettlement (e.g. Bui 2018), contributing to communicate collective memories within the diaspora and beyond.

Vietnamese refugees in Germany today are also rallying for the recognition of their migration history and their victims in public, often presenting the national flag of the RVN

as a symbol of their identity (fieldwork Berlin, Feb. 2016). Public symbols of commemoration in Germany are also a plate at the harbor in Hamburg devoted to those Vietnamese refugees that left Vietnam over the sea (Su/Sanko 2017) and in NRW that serve also as places for the community of Vietnamese refugees for commemoration practices (fieldwork Berlin, 2016). Moral demands arising from their migration histories among Vietnamese refugees in Germany culminate or are publicly most visible in yearly transnationally organized Vietnamese diasporic protests on April 30th — the Day of Liberation in Vietnam and a Day of Shame for Vietnamese political refugees (Großheim 2010, 151). As with the commemoration of fallen ARVN soldiers or deceased refugees, these public calls for remembering follow the logic of what Nguyen (2016, 24) termed an "ethics of remembering one's own". What is particular in these moral demands of Vietnamese refugees, however, is that they connect their moral demands of remembering or being remembered often with political demands addressed to the current government of the SRV, usually damning human rights violations in the country (fieldwork Berlin, Feb. 2016). Transnational mobility between the home country and the host countries for members of the Vietnamese diaspora generally increased in the 1990s when the government in Hanoi eased policies of return visits for Vietnamese refugees (Cargill/Huynh 2000, 4).

In Vietnam and within the context of this study, however, these mnemonic, moral and political demands played only a role for those urban Vietnamese who had familial or communal relations to Vietnamese refugees abroad. While these moral demands from the Vietnamese refugee diaspora would sometimes result in a sensitized way of communicating with each other on topics of the past in private and semi-public conversations for the sake of familial and communal harmony (e.g. Giang, l. 158-160; Kim, l. 75), they would not necessarily lead to mnemonic practices that would specifically meet the moral demands for commemoration from diasporic groups in public in Vietnam.

Within this transnational dynamic, however, Nguyen (2013, 708) found in her research on ARVN veterans in Australia that some of the former servicemen felt indebted to their compatriots who were not able to leave the country and rebuild a new life abroad. This feeling of moral debt and guilt encouraged one of her interviewees to engage in transnational philanthropic work for disabled veterans in Vietnam. Her oral history study shows that even though ARVN veterans as marginalized group might not have articulated moral claims to be remembered and/or taken care of, their emigrated comrades still took social action based on their own moral beliefs and resettlement experience. Nguyen (2013,

708) noted that this kind of social action can also be considered a coping strategy of dealing with traumatic experiences. In the memory context that would mean that traumatic memories can provoke solidary social action towards those who once shared the traumatic experiences with or among victims who suffered from war.

While my own empirical data did not include interviews with former ARVN military, it yet comprised interviews with relatives of ARVN veterans (Dan, An, Yen, Duong). Although the fathers of two of them went through re-education, imprisonment and physical violence, they did not articulate any moral demands from those who have caused that suffering. It seems as if, both, although with an age difference of decades, fear or have accepted that in the current society they are living in, there is still no room for moral claims on their fathers' behalfs in public. Such missing practices of blaming or demanding moral compensation on past injustices and suffering in the interviews corresponds with the lack of moral demands in Cargill and Huynh's (2000) collected autobiographical essays on memories of Vietnamese refugees.

Kim (\*1979, Nghe An, SRV), the highly educated, cosmopolitan activist and single mother, was also the only person that indirectly called for reconciliation with Vietnamese refugees abroad and thus to live in a tolerant, open and transnational Vietnamese society (Kim, l. 101). Given the data, the moral demand for reconciliation thus seems to be limited or only voiced within activist or intellectual circles.

What occurs in the responses of some of the middle-aged, but more of the younger respondents, is also an indirect moral demand for forgetting. While for some younger persons, the moral and historical obligations from the times of revolution persist and align with socialist ideology and morality (Doan 2005, 460; Schwenkel 2011, 128), others showed a disinterest, saturation and disconnect to the national history as commonly represented (e.g. Trung, Hai, Kim, Cat). While they need to respect the experiences and memories of the elder, they not always want to be reminded of it. A lot of them have also expressed this will to forget and their distancing in describing their MCPs, e.g. by dooming history lessons as boring and historical state TV content as repetitive. Whether forgetting would actually help to close some of the cleavages between social groups in Vietnam's society for the post-reform generation remains an open question. Unconventionally to Western minds, one respondent suggested that tensions are silenced and cleavages only overcome with the succession of a generation and thus *thay mau* — the exchange of blood (Hai, l. 167). This conception comes close to Connerton's (2008, 62-63) third type of forgetting that he considers "constitutive in the formation of a new identity" and rather emphasizes the gain

rather than the loss through forgetting. In the Vietnamese context that means while historical obligation is expected to some extent from younger generations, their forgetting is also seen by some as a chance to renew society and thus also close divides by not carrying on the conflicts of their predecessors.

The chapter on making sense of norms, values and morality has carved out the normative implications of communicating memories. Normative dimension materialize as drivers and rules of MCPs as well as opinions about public forms of collective memory. These norms of and normative views on MCPs correspond to value orientations, particularly at the familial and societal level. They regulate and provide orientation in engaging with collective pasts. In the Vietnamese context, seniority surfaces as the prime norm and moral debt, filial piety and familial harmony as prime values for communicating memories interpersonally. At societal and state level, value-based disconnections between socialist ideology of remembering and notably younger respondents' lifeworlds occur more often. Critical interviewees demand completeness, plurality and truth in communicating memories publicly. As a greater change in policies is unlikely, critical people turn to alternate sources, rarely activism. Moral demands from marginalized groups in public remembering are not voiced. While intergenerational cooperation and obligation (Thompson 2009) and commemoration for the living and the dead exist on the basis of kinship, ideology and "remembering one's own" (Nguyen 2016, 24), acknowledging the suffering of others, including civilian victims or marginalized groups, plays a minor role in the interview data. Yet, looking at the normative implications and value orientations of communicating memories tells us more about what kind of society people aspire to live in.

### **7.3 Making sense of civic engagement with memory politics**

The previous chapter already touched upon facets of memory politics as its policies in Vietnam encourage certain value orientations in line with socialist morality (Doan 2005). Promoting common values and an "ethics of remembering one's own" (Nguyen 2016, 24) through communicating memories is part of a larger continuous nation-building project of the CPV. Nguyen-Thu (2019, 4) criticized that scholarship on Vietnamese nationalism often overemphasizes the focus on state power. The following chapter therefore first scrutinizes what people themselves consider "political" and which political dimensions the interview data of this study include. Afterwards, the discussion elaborates on the wider academic discourse on memory politics in Vietnam and how people respond to measures as part of their civic engagement.

### 7.3.1 Political dimensions of MCRs

The political dimensions of MCRs to be discussed in this subchapter include respondents' understandings of communicating memories as a civic or political issue. Most of the respondents declared little interest in politics in general, when asked directly in the card-sorting exercise (see 5.2). While some remained vague, others provided more specific reasons for their lack of interest in politics such as the one-party system (e.g. Hai, l. 29) or its abstract and complex nature (Trung, l. 48).

Despite the often-stated indifference towards general state politics in Vietnam, respondents' accounts and their analyzed MCRs yet showed hints of political engagement with other mnemonic agents or content. Such understandings of collective remembering as political surfaced in the empirical data (1) in respondents' articulated awareness or evaluation that some forms of mnemonic communication follow a particular political agenda or interests of political institutions, including their comments about these political measures, (2) in MCPs that qualify as civic or political engagement (3) in MCPs devoted to political figures.

#### 7.3.1.1 Awareness about ideological mnemonic content

(1) Not all informants in the study expressed awareness about the ideological or political nature of state institutions' mnemonic content or narratives. Whereas the musical show *Giai Dieu Tu Hao* represented an entertainment show with favored music of the past for some (see e.g. Huong, Hang, Phuong), others denounced it as a form of propaganda and political communication on behalf of the state (e.g. Vinh), as it only screened revolutionary songs (*nhac do*). Usually the perception of mnemonic content as political coincided with critical views on the content at hand. The most critical respondents towards the political authorities in Vietnam were also the ones that perceived cultural policies on remembering as critical, sometimes as even fabricated by the state and thus inauthentic (e.g. Kim, Vinh, Hung). This criticism usually grounds on a more general scepticism towards state institutions and their policies. These critical views were more often voiced from respondents who lived in HCMC and had either personal life experiences in the RVN and of post-unification politics in the South and/or had lived abroad.

In another, previously addressed account, Hai (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) witnessed an online forum debate on contested memories surrounding the unification of Vietnam. He recalled that the web administrator sanctioned the online debate on conflicting experiences and

memories of the country's unification by deleting the posts. As Hai explained, this censoring of the mnemonic debate happened due to its political nature.

*H: [...] there is a fighting about the North Vietnam and the South Vietnam become one for example in 1975 or something. Some stupid stuff like people from, why people in the South hate people in the North? Some people experience at that time and write at that time people not do something like this, like this and they steal something like that. We don't like it and they have a fight. They protect themselves. They give another opinion and this continues as long as possible. As people, you read that so you have opinions from two sides and I think that's good. When the fight like that begin, usually (?) topic will be deleted by the admin anyway (laughing).*

*I: Deleted?*

*H: Yeah if it goes too far*

*I: What would be too far?*

*H: Like it involved politics. (Hai, l. 81-85)*

Hai's (\*1991, HCMC, SRV) report incorporates two political aspects of awareness: first, Hai recognizes the online debate about conflicting memories on Vietnam's unification as a political issue that produces different standpoints. In his view, the topic of these contested memories is situated in a political context, but he remains vague about the actors and their interests involved. We can therefore assume that Hai talks about forum participants that remain largely anonymous as mnemonic agents and that he deduced the political nature on the basis of the topic of debate. Second, Hai articulated in his explanation on sanctions in this mnemonic online debate awareness about online censorship. It remains unclear whether the posts of the argument were deleted on the administrator's own account or on order of state agents. It is generally known that state agents in Vietnam also act on social media to provoke reactions, reveal political standpoints or report critical posts or sites (Abuza 2015, 13). Similar measures have been observed on social media platforms in other authoritarian states such as Russia (Kalinina/Menke 2016, 71).

While Hai witnessed the censorship of contentious, political memories (see 6.2.2.3) online, he received an understanding of public policies over communicating memories. These policies, including online censorship, try to secure the power and interpretative authority over mnemonic narratives in public. Although Hai noticed these mechanisms of control, he appreciated the appropriation of different political views on the past. At the same time, he hesitated in elaborating about the mnemonic online debate and delegitimized the struggle over collective pasts by referring to it as "stupid stuff" (Hai, l. 81). This verbal mitigation might be an expression of little personal relevance of the issue in his life and thus distancing himself from the conflicts of previous generations or a precaution not to make political statements himself in the interview.

The awareness of political messages in certain forms and contexts of mnemonic communication was not only made in reference to current media contacts or social relations, but also in retrospective, e.g. in regard to one's own school education and socialization. In the interview with Van (\*1974, Hanoi, DRV), she expressed awareness about her own political education and ideological indoctrination at her highschool in the 1980s (l. 48-52). As a child, she did not understand the reasons for her bad grade on an assignment about the revolutionist heroine Chi Tu Hau but as an adult, she recognized the political implications of her history education.

What we can conclude from these examples on political awareness about mnemonic content of varying actors is that respondents actively assign political meaning to specific mediated representations and narrations of the past. The assigned political meanings to mnemonic content can change over time in the life course of respondents. Political awareness can arise from moments of irritation regarding mnemonic content as in Van's example, but also from an increasing accumulation of knowledge in the course of one's career. Political awareness can also provide a lense for critical views on mnemonic content and enables people to detect controversies and thus contested sites of official memory as in the examples of Vinh, Hai and Giang. Respondents who share that political awareness are thus often aware of the plurality of collective memory in Vietnam and beyond in the diaspora.

This political awareness about mnemonic content can arise from a particular MCP as in Van's history lessons at school. In the other cases, prior knowledge about the origins and backgrounds of the mnemonic content is required in order to be able to situate and evaluate this content as political. In these cases, socialization (for Hai with family members in the diaspora), level of education, political interest and international contacts are key factors in building such awareness. This political awareness or assigning of political meaning to mnemonic content can have consequences for the further institutionalization of MCPs in respondents' lifeworlds (see 6.2.3) and eventually perpetuation processes. These political meanings can be framed as negative in the sense of state propaganda (e.g. Vinh) or as positive in the form of deliberative discourse (Habermas 1996, 273) about the past (e.g. Hai). Both examples demonstrate a critical awareness about the power of the state over articulations of memory, even from those working in public service. It illustrates the multifacetedness of reading public memories also in an authoritarian state setting (Reifova 2015, 80).

Besides respondents' awareness, the second example of Hai's account also hints at mnemonic communication practices of others in online spaces, including their potential in providing alternate versions about the past based on shared experiences and memories. Similarly, An's (\*1990, HCMC, SRV) experience with the Facebook group "Old people of Saigon" showed that online groups like that can open up an alternate, but limited space for collective remembering that challenges dominant public narratives in Vietnam. Initiated by members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora, the Facebook group reaches Vietnamese citizens with links to the diaspora and those who are interested in the history of the RVN. Official information on the RVN in Vietnam is scarce beyond the accounts as a "puppet" state (Großheim 2016, 27; Marr 2002, 16). We have to acknowledge, however, that these examples of transnational online empowerment of memory agents were rare in the empirical data. While there is facilitating potential of voicing and raising awareness about politically contested memories through (transnational) online communication, the democratizing and empowering of SNS, especially in authoritarian states, should not be overestimated (see also Kalinina/Menke 2016, 70-71; Kaun/Stiernstedt 2014, 1165). In Vietnam, the government also recently reached an agreement with Facebook as the most popular SNS to delete alleged illegal content, including anti-government posts (Pearson 2020).

### 7.3.1.2 MCPs as civic and political action

(2) The second political dimension within MCRs addresses MCPs that are conceived of as civic or political duty. In the spectrum of interview data, such MCPs range in their extremes from volunteering in state- initiated programs as civil service to pro-democratic activism. The latter has been previously addressed along with practices of contestation (see subchapter 6.2.3). Among practices of contestation, not every memory practice is political in an organized fashion. Political activism is found in the subcategory of *spreading suppressed memories* (see 6.2.3.2) that deliberately circumvents state censorship and restricting policies of memory politics. Again Kim (\*1979, SRV) intellectual and activist from Nghe An province, stood out in this regard. Her political activism also affected her everyday engagements with collective pasts and challenged the state's dominance over public remembering. Her political activism included the distribution of knowledge from and about the past throughout her personal and professional networks inside Vietnam and abroad. Taking and using her position within these networks can be regarded as a form of empowerment in its own terms, as these allowed Kim to appropriate alternate perspectives on e.g. the RVN and pluralize and add to her previous knowledge about Vietnam's past.

The alternate knowledge she accumulated about national and cultural history is usually censored or omitted by institutional state bodies. Despite e.g. the history and culture of "the South", Kim's MCPs also deal with literary works and thus cultural memory as a literary canon (A. Assmann 2008). Her activism in the form of *practices of contestation* is not limited to finding access to alternate views, but also in distributing and circulating the knowledge across her networks and a wider public. This form of distribution through contesting MCPs creates a gateway to knowledge of and about the past for others and thus challenges the seemingly exclusive power of the state over public knowledge and memory. We need to acknowledge, however, that Kim's activism is not only driven by a mnemonic cause, but that the interest in elucidating others about the past conflates with political activism that questions and challenges the political system in Vietnam as a whole. While her MCP as political action serves the criticism on current politics and thus goes in line with Halbwachs' (1985, 55) argument of presentism of memory, Kim's political actions do not solely address suppressed knowledge about the past. It also needs to be acknowledged that while this political activism exists in an informants' MCR, it represents the empowerment of a small segment of an intellectual, privileged middle class.

While Kim's political activism matches the common understandings of activism in Western societies, *practices of institutionalized memory work* (see 6.2.1.7) rather comprise services to society that are compliant with the state's political agenda. Institutionalized memory work, e.g. at schools and universities, aims at political education according to the party line. Dror (2018, 76) notes that the politicization of school education intensified in the DRV in the late 1960s by strengthening the teachings of "revolutionary ideology and loyalty to socialism". Doan (2005) lays out in her research that socialist morality and ideology are still important themes in the curricula of public schools and universities today. She also points out the role of institutionalized voluntary campaigns of educational institutions that are aimed at raising good socialist citizens (Doan 2005, 461). The most prominent one is *Mùa hè xanh* ("Green Summer") established by the Vietnamese Youth Union in the 1990s. The Youth Union is a socio-political organization once founded by Ho Chi Minh and responsible for providing political education to students, especially through extra-curricular activities (Tran 2017, 26). Tran (ibid.) notes that in recent years, the Youth Union has also concentrated on activities of social engagements that would enhance students' career options.

In the context of this study, Nhung (\*1993, Hanoi, SRV) reported to have taken part in a university campaign that dealt with cultural and national heritage sites in Vietnam. While

Nhung herself did not describe her voluntary tour guide work as political and also did not refer to any socio-political body except for the university. Her reference to the "summer campaign" (Nhung, l. 221) implies that she possibly talked about the same program. Nhung herself stressed the voluntary character of the program and thus the aspect of service to society. Secondly, she emphasized her own gain in engaging with national history and heritage of her country. She did not address any institutional intent of the campaign. Foregrounding the civic engagement and advantages for developing a personal career presents a shift in the Youth Union's activities that seems to make their work appear less political and catering more to the interests of Vietnam's urban youth. According to Vietnamese education scholars, these summer campaigns are, however, still supposed to strengthen students' identification with socialist ideology (Doan 2005, 461; Tran 2017). While these are the most detailed and obvious examples of civic engagement through communicating memories in the interview data, we can also consider initiatives on preserving heritage (e.g. Duy, Cat) or participating in mnemonic community events (e.g. Nguyen) in people's leisure time a civic cause and duty. However, in-depth data on these activities is lacking in order to elaborate on them and their political implications further.

### *7.3.1.3 MCPs devoted to political figures*

(3) A third political dimension in respondents' MCRs refers to MCPs that are devoted to political figures. Such figures range from mythical figures such as the Hung Kings who are considered the founding fathers of the country (Dror 2016), political leaders as well as revolutionary martyrs and heroes. Usually these political figures are already deceased. Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap and Phan Boi Chau were the most frequently discussed politicians in the study. That is also the result of the visual stimuli provided through visual elicitation during the interviews (see 5.2; appendix 9.1.2).

As Viet Thanh Nguyen (2016, 11) noted that "[...] the citizenry is constantly called to remember the nation's own heroes and dead, [...]" as a measure of the state's identity politics in order to strengthen nationalism (ibid., 17). Throughout history, political regimes in Vietnam have exploited people's traditional beliefs in "tutelary spirits" and national heroes (Tréglodé 2012; Dror 2017). The accounts of Vietnamese urbanites, however, do not present a consensus on who is supposed to be remembered as hero. This heterogeneity in defining the heroes of the country, an articulated indifference or even criticism towards publicly celebrated heroes hints at the ceasing power of these heroic images, particularly in the younger generations. Even commemorating Ho Chi Minh is not free from controversy or indifference among informants (e.g. Hau, Hai) despite the publicly ubiquitous

personality cult that promotes him as the greatest hero and national father (Tai 1995, 274-275). Critical voices of HCMC residents from the elder generation prove of the fact that propagated heroism in Vietnam has never been appropriated by the entire population neither before nor after unification. In the Laotian context, Oliver Tappe (2008, 84) similarly explains people's diverging perceptions of national heroes through the population's former separation and thus their ideological socialization.

I have pointed out several times now that familial and ideological socialization is crucial in explaining differences, when people engage with collective pasts. With regard to national heroes, for example, Saigonese Hung (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) provoked the question of why no one would publicly commemorate the mayor of his city or would celebrate the foundation of the city (l. 137). In this statement, Hung reveals his deviant standpoint towards official commemoration of national heroes in Vietnam and suggests alternatives on the basis of his own autobiography. In a similar vein, Hung doubts the authenticity of revived commemorations of and beliefs in mythical figures such as the Hung Kings (l. 128-137). He sees further alternatives in the Nguyen Lords. Further alternatives to Vietnam's official revolutionary heroes were intellectuals Phan Chu Trinh, Nguyen Trai (Kim l. 103) or revolutionary and former general secretary of the CPV Nguyen Van Linh (Oanh, l. 116).

Yet, the interview data still contain a larger number of admirers of revolutionary heroes among urban respondents. Among these endorsers of revolutionary thought, commemorative, worshipping practices and praising commentary does indeed address most prominently Ho Chi Minh. The empirical data indicates on several instances, that the commemoration of him as a national hero transcends spheres of the political and spiritual, the familial and the public. That becomes most apparent in his portraits' presence on or near ancestral altars at families' homes (e.g. Kim's mother; Huong). Other MCPs related to his cult included the participation in commemorative festivals devoted to him (e.g. Nhien), visits to national museums and significant places of his life and work (e.g. Linh) as well as to his burial place. In addition, visual elicitation data demonstrates that quite many informants adopted official narratives of heroism and national pride (Tai 2001b; Magara 2012, 25-30) in their own personal descriptions of Ho as a national figure. These heroism and nationalist narratives occur across generational groups and thus do not depend on direct experience with Ho or his political cause during his lifetime.

*Every time I went to Mausoleum, I felt I can see HO CHI MINH, President HO CHI MINH and I feel respect to him and I am so proud of what he did for my country. (Nga, \*1994, Hanoi, SRV, l. 189)*

*In my memory, I think I really admire him when I see him in the. Directly see him, , I feel more. It's difficult to talk but I think it's the dream of Vietnamese people to see him directly. (Nhien, \*1980, Nghe An, SRV, l. 121)*

*But this time is very bad time for Vietnamese people when Ho Chi Minh is dead, when you think of Ho Chi Minh, he brings us everything, but is already dead. (Hop, \*1958, Hanoi, DRV, l. 85)*

While one HCMC resident, Hoa (\*1993, Can Tho, SRV, l. 161) also articulated admiration for Ho, heroic narratives were notably reproduced first and foremost by Hanoian residents. The view on the identification with Ho Chi Minh underscores once more that these practices and beliefs compliant to dominant memory largely originate in people's ideological socialization, family histories, their political commitment and own experiences with communism. Moreover, Ho Chi Minh's adoration as sentiment among Vietnamese urbanites and hegemonic narrative seems to have reached such a level of dominance in public that for some, his status has already become an unquestionable truth (Kalinina/Menke 2016, 71). The empirical data of this study demonstrates that although not for all, Ho Chi Minh's personality cult lives on in communicating memories in the everyday, particularly among Hanoian residents and revolutionary families. This finding underlines again Tai's (1995, 278) observation that the cult is more deeply rooted in the daily lives of the northern population due to its longterm establishment in the region.

Commemorating and worshipping revolutionary heroes, however, is not constrained to Ho Chi Minh. Compared to Western culture, official public memory in Vietnam is more female as seen in the public depictions of female heroic figures (Nguyen 2016, 9; Tai 2001c). The interview data confirms the female presence in commemorating, studying and worshipping national figures in Vietnam. Lanh (\*1955, Nghe An, DRV) e.g. recalled her trip Vo Thi Sau's worship site on Con Dao Island. Vo Thi Sau resisted French colonialism and was killed under French arrest on Con Dao island according to the official state narration. Today, her considered martyrdom have led to spiritual ceremonies at her tomb, celebrating her as a goddess (VOV5 2012). This just another example of the conflating spheres of the spiritual and the political in communicating memories in Vietnam (Giebel 2001, 77; 2004). Again, there is also a bias towards remembering revolutionists according to the Party line.

The political dimensions of informants' MCRs illustrate that people assign different political meanings to certain communicated mnemonic content, depending on their prior knowledge, ideological leanings and transnational experience. These various ways of assigning meaning also correspond with varying degrees of political awareness. What some might enjoy as entertainment, others perceive as state propaganda. The data indicates that a higher degree in political awareness usually goes hand in hand with awareness about a greater plurality of collective memories in Vietnam despite the hegemonic version. This

political awareness can change during one's life course. At the practice level, some MCPs qualify as political because they are understood as civic participation or duty to society. These include e.g. participating in institutionalized memory work from state organization or the activist-led sharing of suppressed memories. Finally, the commemoration and thus belief in heroic figures is an important resource for gaining insights on how people as citizens make sense of national figures and memory politics of the state. We have seen that the admiration for national heroes taps on traditional beliefs and transcends the boundaries of the political and the spiritual. The Ho Chi Minh cult lives on, particularly among Hanoians, despite or maybe just because of the vast socio-cultural changes of modern urban life. Heroic worship in Vietnam is feminized but stays biased towards revolutionaries, which does not reflect the diversity of opinions among interviewed urbanites. The following chapter elaborates further on people's engagement with and responses to the state's mnemonic agenda and intentions.

### 7.3.2 Engaging with memory politics in an authoritarian state

Collective memory is "a strategic resource in the struggle for power" (Nguyen 2016, 10). In this sense, communicating memories strategically provide means to navigate power dynamics. The struggle for power does not only concern political elites, but also the relationship of the state and its citizenry. Memory politics in the context of this dissertation is understood as all measures of a state regime that determine the access to and production of knowledge about and representations of the past. Such measures include strategies that aim at regime stability, nation-building and thus ultimately at social order (West 2016, 455). This chapter deepens previous discussions on normative and political dimensions of MCRs by looking at power dynamics of memory politics between authoritarian regimes and their citizens. Drawing from the summary of mnemonic strategies of the CPV (see 4.2.1) and literature on memory politics in other post-socialist societies and own empirical data, the following chapter discusses citizens' communicative engagement with particular measures of memory politics in an authoritarian, non-democratic environment.

In the case of Vietnam, previous literature showed that "the state", meaning its executive arm in the form of the leading CPV, has a strong grip on state institutions and thus important institutional memory agents such as schools and museums. The concentration of political power on the CPV, its entailed political bodies and mass organizations provide it with immense assets in carrying out memory politics. Such assets lie in the monopoly of

strategic use of communicating memories — namely, the formation, access and regulation of knowledge about "the" national past and power over resources of control.

Authoritarian states aim at establishing social order by securing regime stability and nation-building. In order to discuss citizens' engagement with such measures of memory politics, I suggest to differentiate between legitimizing strategies of memory politics that aim at regime stability and harmonizing strategies that aim at nation-building. What is the scope of citizens' responses and capacity to act upon such state strategies based on the empirical data from Vietnam? Do these strategies of memory politics actually reach the urban population?

### *7.3.2.1 Legitimization strategies for regime stability*

Memory politics are often generally described as measures in order to legitimize existing power relations (Assmann/Assmann, 1994, 124-126). Prior research on collective memory in Vietnam confirmed such general theorizations, demonstrating how the CPV and its predecessors have constantly spread master narratives of national history and omitted others in order to consolidate and sustain its rule (Mensel 2013, 134; 4.2.1). Political scientist Tuong Vu (2014, 33) further noted that often single-party regimes' "persistence can be traced back to regime-founding moments." Regimes thus need to strategically communicate memories of such "regime-founding moments" to their citizens.

From the literature review and field observations, we know that the CPV largely propagates historical events and dates through public holidays, events and state media, including print, broadcasting and street banners. Officially significant, regime-founding moments comprise e.g. the foundation of the CPV on February 3rd, 1930 and Ho Chi Minh's declaration of independence on September 2nd, 1945 that also marked the implementation of the DRV. Today, September 2nd is still publicly celebrated as a holiday, particularly on anniversaries (Sanko 2016b). Further founding moments related to the regime observed in the field are the foundation of the People's Army of Vietnam on December 22nd, 1944. All of these events represent key moments in the process of decolonization and correspond with historiographic master narratives of the struggles for national independence and liberation against "foreign aggressors" (Taylor 2001, 29). The emphasis on these regime-founding events in public memory and historiography, their communicative framing in narratives of achievement for national independence, their state-initiated ritualized remembering and assigned value through the status of (public) holiday officially support the image of the CPV as a rightful leader that dedicated its cause to Vietnamese citizens' independence and freedom. Independence day as a regime-founding event and date was regularly mentioned

in the interviews. Through visual elicitation, respondents mostly recognized depictions of people and places related to these events, e.g. Ba Dinh square where Ho declared national independence 1945 in Hanoi. This recognition speaks for people's knowledge and familiarity with the event. They also agreed on its significance for the national history of Vietnam, informants usually did not frame it as a particular achievement of the CPV. Rather the event remained associated with Ho Chi Minh as a leader and iconic figure only. This observation suggests that people differentiate well between the CPV as a political body of past and present and Ho as a deceased former leader.

For the foundation of the CPV, only few respondents mentioned it on their own account as an important date in the history of Vietnam (e.g. Luan \*1976, Lao Cai, SRV; Trung, \*1993, Hanoi, SRV; Van \*1974, Hanoi, SRV) despite the fact that the history of the party is subject to school and higher education and commemorated in public. This observation, however, fits to the often-articulated disinterest in politics by interviewees and Doan's (2005, 458) observed reluctance of Vietnamese students with political subjects. The foundation of the PAVN as the military arm of the state was only recognized as historical event by a few upon visual impulse.

The informants did not report on any personal commemorative involvement or routines on either anniversary of the three discussed regime-founding events despite their public propagation. Anniversaries and holidays connected to these regime-founding moments apparently do not exceed the status of historical knowledge appropriated in school, museums or from mass-media reports. These results speak for a gap between the party's aim to uphold the memory of their achievements in ritualized cycles and respondents' personal MCPs in the everyday. Public holidays such as Independence Day are not related to present contexts, neither to current politics nor to people's own daily lives. This gap suggests that the legitimizing strategy on the basis of regime-founding moments of the CPV does not necessarily fulfill its initial intent. Respondents do not judge current politics or the party more positively because of historical achievements. Reasons can be first, informants differentiate between the former or historical organizations of the CPV and the current one. Second, in an urban middle class society that is used to international cooperation and solidarity, national sovereignty on these grounds is not a primary concern for cosmopolitans anymore and independence has become a state of normalcy. Third, the holiday as leisure time is of greater relevance than the actual commemoration of the historical event in busy urban lives.

While the propagation and celebration of these regime-founding events was already established in the DRV (Pelley 2002), it needs to be noted that for Southerners these were only introduced after unification. The public communication and remembrance of regime-founding events and thus the basis for a revolutionary tradition thus has greater continuity in Northern Vietnam than in the Southern region. This different socialization has led Hung (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) for example to remind of the establishment of South Vietnam (l. 232). His remark clearly diverges from dominating CPV narratives and provides an historical anchor for the legitimate existence of a Southern state.

Besides regime-founding moments, we may further add regime-affirming moments such as the end of the Second Indochina War with the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 as legitimizing strategies in memory politics aiming for regime stability. The day that is officially celebrated as the day of victory, liberation and unification and established as a public holiday in the SRV has great symbolic meaning for Vietnam's leading party as the victory of communism over imperialist forces. This way, April 30th continuously marks and reaffirms the power of the Communist regime that aimed "to liberate the South", reunite and built a new socialist society after the war. Similarly to Independence Day, the responses acknowledge this central regime-affirming moment in the official historiography and in the memory politics of the SRV. Informants recognize its wide media coverage but do not initiate own MCPs on this occasion. Many of the middle-class informants use the day for rest, familial or leisure time activities unrelated to the historical event. What the focus on familial and leisure time shows is a tendency towards depoliticized responses to this event in national history. Whether the reasons of this apparent depoliticization are indeed thematic indifference, the avoidance of talking about or coping with sensitive topics is not always clearly visible in interviewee's responses. In some cases of HCMC residents, however, we see that the historical event represents a rupture in family or autobiographies. This rupture is usually articulated by the language of pre-1975 or after 1975 instead of referring to "unification" as an event (e.g. Giang, Cat, Hai, An). In cases of RVN socialization and family histories of post-war suffering under communism after unification, the event could also serve as an occasion for alternate or even anti-communist narratives (e.g. Dan, Hung). The majority of informants, however, stuck to the dominant victory, liberation and unification narratives with respect to the event. It is remarkable that negative memories are related to the current regime in the form of criticism of present-day politics, but those who rearticulate official narratives of "Victory Day" do not link these collective memories to the current party and leadership. This pattern suggests that negative memories

with the regime in place leads to deligitimization effects for current power relations, but positive ones do not necessarily save the current regime from criticism or do serve as a narrative template for current politics. The historical continuity that the CPV seeks through its legitimization strategies therefore is only or most clearly given through CPV-criticism, which is obviously counterproductive for regime-stability. While positive "achievement" narratives persist in the urban middle class and speak for the power and persistence of such master narratives in particular societies (Wertsch 2011, 175), their power does not necessarily lead to an unquestioned backing of today's CPV. The continuity the party seeks to create in communicating monolithic memories does not reflect in people's responses. Instead people only do relate mnemonic narratives to the present if they match their current political leaning.

For citizens of the former RVN, April 1975 was a regime-changing moment instead of an affirming one. Historical accounts on memory politics in Vietnam (Pelley 2002, Tréglodé 2012) showed that the CPV usually took measures already prior or quickly after regime changes in order to consolidate its power and secure its future. After the Fall of Saigon, this included the erasure of Southern literature, ban of Southern music and spiritual festivals, changes of the educational system, destruction of ARVN cemeteries, replacement of street names and statues and most violently re-education and resettlement to so-called New Economic Zones (Taylor 2001; Nguyen 2016; Su/Sanko 2017). Yet, while the CPV radically changed and published historical accounts in their own favor and tried to mitigate or ban historical traditions dating back prior to its rule after unification, the empirical data shows that it did not succeed in changing people's everyday life habits, preferences and certainly not (perpetuated) memories based on life experiences.

Some respondents also reported on moments of disenchantment with the regime after unification (e.g. Van, l. 188) and the morally high price paid for it (e.g. Hang, l. 85-90). Such retrospective reflections on former political decisions, measures and unfulfilled expectations following them, creates a need for the government to legitimize former actions, policies during its rule in order to regain the trust of its citizenry. The leadership, however, rarely conducted critical reassessments of past decisions publicly. Nguyen (2016, 5) sees this need for legitimization of former actions of a state or government especially in the context of war. The author suggests that the memories of war are a particularly meaningful for the state-citizen relationship. For Vietnam, we know that the communist leadership applied master narratives or "narrative templates" (Wertsch 2011, 175) to its conflicts with other foreign powers (Mensel 2013, 127). Their focus on achievements

(Giebel 2004; Großheim 2018), martyrdom and persistence in political will (Mensel 2013, 134) seek to justify former conflicts, political aims and decisions of the ruling government and change processes during these times. Their thematic focus and positive framing seeks to create legitimacy as losses are officially justified as sacrifices for a righteous cause. The empirical data, however, suggests that such legitimizing communication strategies of the leadership alone are insufficient if they are not followed by political measures of material recompensation (e.g. Van, l. 287) and moral recompensation in form of transparency (e.g. Hung, l. 244).

The communicative acknowledgement of people's contributions and sacrifices during times of conflict and war in the form of e.g. martyr cemeteries, monuments or commemoration days did not automatically lead to more satisfaction with post-unification politics within the population. The legitimization of further conflicts such as the Vietnamese-Cambodian War and the Sino-Vietnamese War in the aftermath of unification posed an even greater challenge for the political leadership as the population still suffered from the legacies of previous wars. That these more recent wars are not subject to history education or public commemoration in Vietnam with a few exceptions of the Vietnamese-Cambodian War and thus are largely tabooed in public prove of a missing legitimization strategy in memory politics of the leadership towards these events. The missing public acknowledgements particularly regarding the losses from the Sino-Vietnamese War leaves part of the population sceptic over the leaderships' memory politics (e.g. Binh, l. 165; Phong, l. 164). Only recently, an official cemetery opened (Großheim 2016, 35). The lack of legitimizing or tabooing of historical events of conflict in which part of the population participated as part of foreign affairs politics of the country (further) erode citizens' trust in political institutions and thus risks its own legitimacy as mnemonic agent. That shows after all that the mediated life experience of time witnesses, especially within the family, still matters within the population. The witnesses are competitive actors in the power struggle over communicating memories in Vietnam. Where memory politics seeks to establish taboos, time witnesses might be the only source that provide information, prove official historical narratives wrong or testify of political failures that the powerful elite would not admit in public. The lack of paying public tribute to the victims of the Sino-Vietnamese War can generate increasing dissatisfaction and destabilization particularly in recent times of growing anti-Chinese sentiments and protests in Vietnam (Nguyen 2017).

### 7.3.2.2 *Harmonizing strategies for nation-building*

Besides legitimization strategies of memory politics striving for regime-stability, the CPV has applied harmonizing strategies in order to raise a common national consciousness. Harmonizing strategies particularly concern the production, distribution and regulation of a standardized stock of knowledge about the past, especially representations and narratives of national history and heritage. The following discussion of harmonizing strategies therefore concentrates on national history as one form of collective memory and its representations in the form of historiographic texts, national heroes and symbols.

Such strategies of memory politics are by no means a country-specific phenomenon. Authoritarian regimes have always sought for historiographic hegemony by enforcing and envisioning particular ideological narratives, icons and symbols in order to nurture the belief in a common national identity (Tappe 2008, 21). The need for harmonizing strategies in memory politics as part of a nation-building project becomes particularly pressing in states with a history of separation and in societies in which the concept of a nation is relatively new. In heterogeneous societies, nation-building and thus forging a common national identity seeks to prevent conflicts and secure political stability. It further tries to conceal internal contradictions and discontinuities among political elites (ibid., 11-13). The national self-affirmation needed for the process of nation-building is realized among other measures by harmonizing strategies such as ritualized acts of state commemoration (ibid., 11) as well as the construction of national heroes (Tréglodé 2012), monolithic historiography, including and founding myths (Marr 2002) and the promotion of national heritage (Tappe 2008, 24).

As discussed in the literature review (see 4.2), memory politics in Vietnam under the CPV already served the aims of nation-building in colonial and post-colonial times (Tréglodé 2012; Pelley 2002). Historically, strategies of nation-building during these times in Vietnam served to establish and consolidate power after periods of political unrest, divisions and regime changes. I have already discussed the role of commemorating regime-founding events as legitimizing factor of Communist rule, but the introduction of ritualized state commemoration of these events is at the same time a harmonizing factor. The introduction of Independence Day or Reunification Day as public holidays is not only a demonstration and legitimization of the power of the ruling party, but they are also supposed to provide an occasion for the whole nation to celebrate these events united. While data approved of a wide acknowledgement of these days as important historical dates in national history, it showed little civic engagement with state events on these commemoratives days. The

preoccupation with family and leisure activities of respondents on these public holidays does not speak for them as mnemonic instruments for projecting or rearticulating national sentiments. The responses rather indicate individualized activities with family or friends as the prioritized social entities as frames of reference.

This picture changes to some extent when we have a look at ritualized acts of state commemoration devoted to considered national heroes instead of historical events. Many of the interviewees for example have at least once visited the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and thus took part in state-encouraged commemorative practices. Ho's image as a virtuous and humble man who selflessly devoted his life to the independence of Vietnamese stands in stark contrast to the image of the political elite in present-day Vietnam and many people's dissatisfaction with widespread corruption. In the absence of trusted political leaders, the commemoration and worship of Ho seems to be a major anchor for a sense of common belonging and an upheld belief in socialist ideology, for some the values of their own past. Ho as the personification of values and principles of socialist ideology and Vietnamese patriotism at the same time make many people of the population identify with him and his idea of a united Vietnamese state. Naturally, this identification with him and participation in his commemorative personality cult work only for those who agree on the socialist and patriotic ideals his public figure represented. Since this is usually not the case with those respondents and citizens who are critical of communism in past and present, the Ho Chi Minh cult enfolds national sentiment only among specific segments of the population, mostly to those whose families supported his revolutionary movement in the past. The data therefore hints at the fact that the ritualized acts of state commemoration and iconography of Ho as a national hero and father of the nation (Tai 1995, 274-275) as represented in places of commemoration (HCM museum, HCM mausoleum, HCM's garden), on every bank note, busts and portraits in every official institution, statues, posters, postcards, stamps, street and city names work mostly for those who or whose ancestors already sympathized with him and communism before.

Ho's legacy was prominently marked with the renaming of Saigon into Ho Chi Minh City after 1975. Former RVN citizens therefore saw themselves confronted with the commemorative personality cult surrounding his personality only after unification. The empirical data does not indicate that former, non-communist RVN citizens and their successors adopted the cult. Harmonizing strategies in regard to the Ho's personality cult therefore correspond to segments of the population who sympathized with communism

and have a cohesive power among them, but could not convince those who were critical of communism in the first place.

The absence or lack of identification with Ho as a national icon, however, does not mean that those people totally lack a reference point or sense of national belonging or pride. A few suggested the legendary Hung Kings as an alternate or additional source of origin as the actual and prehistoric forefathers of a Vietnamese nation (e.g. Hung, l. 128). In the DRV, the role and commemoration of the Hung Kings was at first downplayed and dismissed as "feudal" practice after 1954 (Dror 2017, 125). Such ceremonial mnemonic practices stood against the party's imagination of a new society (ibid.). The party's agenda in the DRV back then was not to erase the commemoration of the Hung Kings altogether, but to strip it off its spiritual nature and historize them.

The goal was to demonstrate a prehistoric tradition of building and fighting for the country, to trace the root of the nation to deep antiquity and to affirm the Hùng Kings as historical ancestors of all Vietnamese in both the North and the South. This agenda aimed to erase the fractured history of Vietnam with centuries of civil wars and separation between the North and the South, [...] (Dror 2017, 126)

At the same time, the dismissal or at least marginalization of religious or ceremonial celebrations of mythical figures was supposed to shift emphasis on the link between the national movements for independence and the CPV (according to Hung). In the South, Hung Kings celebrations and commemorative practices were treated differently by political elites. The government of the State of Vietnam made it an official public holiday in 1949; Diem, prime minister of the First Republic (RVN), dropped it again in 1956. Hung Kings Memorial Day was officially reintroduced in the Second Republic in 1964 in an effort of elites to dewesternize Vietnamese culture (Dror 2017, 129-131). The Hung King memorial day was introduced as a public holiday in 2007, (ibid., 148). The Hung Kings are some of the few national heroic and ancestral figures that are officially celebrated and precede communist rule. As national icons they therefore provide reference points of national identification beyond political leanings, revolutionary backgrounds, social and regional cleavages. In terms of national heroes, we can therefore conclude from the Vietnam case that harmonizing strategies of memory politics remain ineffective if they are solely forced on citizens and ignore their previous, more deeply rooted cultural and political beliefs of their lifeworlds.

Another harmonizing strategy is a standardized historiography. Master narratives of national history can function as "narrative templates" (Wertsch 2011, 176). As "an interpretative framework" they provide orientation when situating present situations (ibid.).

We have seen previously that some citizens adopted these narrative templates as a scheme in their reading and communicating memories in the interviews. The empirical data suggests that respondents who were critical about current and past politics of the CPV were also more likely to question official narrations of national history. Those with revolutionary family background, strong beliefs in socialist ideology and/or with higher trust in public and political institutions, but generally less interest in politics were more likely to comply with and rearticulate historiographic master narratives.

Mensel (2013, 134) argued that monolithic master narratives of self-determination in Vietnamese national historiography are also a reason for national pride in present-day Vietnam. Regarding national pride and nationalism in Vietnam today, Tuong Vu (2014, 37) argued similarly that the former wars played a major role in mobilizing national sentiments. In a similar vein, Nguyen (2016, 5) connected questions of dealing with memories of war with present practices of citizens in the name of the nation.

The problem of how to remember war is central to the identity of the nation, [...]. The battles that shaped the nation are most often remembered by the citizenry as defending the country, usually in the service of peace, justice, freedom or other noble ideas. Dressed in this way, the wars of the past justify the wars of the present for which the citizen is willing to fight or at least pay taxes, wave flags, cast votes and carry forth all the duties and rituals that affirm her or his identity as being one with the nation's. (Nguyen 2016, 5)

The empirical data do in some, but not all cases indeed show parallels between rearticulated master narratives of self-determination in national history and statements of national pride (e.g. Nga, l. 189; Thu, l. 90; Yen, l. 100). National pride is also articulated across various age groups. The lived war experience therefore is not a pre-condition for national sentiments; they can be perpetuated. It is noteworthy that national pride and love towards the country is also articulated by third-generation interviewees whose family background is with the losing side of Vietnam's civil war (e.g. Yen, An). In these cases, Yen (\*1990, Ninh Tuan, SRV) perceived the state as more legitimate mnemonic agent as compared to her family. In the case of An (\*1992, HCMC, SRV), it was the other way around — he articulated national sentiments (l. 28) despite the punishment and discrimination of his family after unification. Thus, historiographic master narratives constructed by the CPV as a harmonizing strategy of memory politics cannot fully explain existing senses of national pride in present-day Vietnam. One explanation is that such national sentiments arise from the identification and connection with the lost Republic. Another one is that there are other factors than politically framed national historiography that forge national identity such as pre-historic heritage or cultural values.

As discussed in the section of normative implications (7.2.1.3), informants' endorsed the preservation of national heritage although it was not always part of people's own MCRs. Seeing value in national heritage did not require one's own specific engagement with it in the everyday. States often take on the self-designated role as the guardian of national heritage as one other means of memory politics for a unified nation (Tappe 2008, 24). There are several initiatives, UNESCO heritage applications and projects that aim at preserving certain places and traditions in Vietnam (UNESCO 2020). Respondents were partially familiar with such policies, but at the same time recognized the vast changes of their urban living spaces, including the demolition of colonial buildings such as the Eden Center in HCMC (e.g. Thuy, l. 49). Mnemonic practices in the everyday are always connected with the question of what is worth and valued to keep and what is not. The states or authorities as "guardians" of national heritage (Tappe 2008, 24) anticipate such evaluations. We have seen that cultural policies in the DRV forbid cultural practices and festivals that they viewed as superstitious or "feudal", but were deeply rooted into the everyday lives of people as cultural traditions (Dror 2017, 125). By forbidding such practices the state also restricted the distribution of knowledge about such cultural traditions as part of public memory.

Nowadays, with Vietnam being a part of an international community, a growing tourism industry and eligible to apply for international support for the preservation of heritage, there is also an economic interest in promoting heritage while striving further for modernization. Restrictions on cultural and spiritual festivals and traditions were loosened again in the 1980s (DiGregorio/Salemink 2007; Jellema 2007). National or cultural heritage in the responses of the interviewees is a wide-ranging concept that includes architecture and sites, design of clothing and everyday items, cultural practices and knowledge about festivals, music, performance, art and food. All of these carry symbolic meaning that some respondents evaluate as typically "Vietnamese" and can be connected to senses of own belonging and varying degrees of national pride. It is noteworthy that often statements on "Vietnameseness" in relation to national heritage are also often accompanied by notions of regional identity as in the case of folk songs (6.1.2.3). The data further shows that certain representations of national heritage can be acknowledged as a typical feature of Vietnamese culture and thus contribute to a national imagination without having appropriated these in their own everyday life. The rarity of considered national heritage, touristic and international interest seem to further raise their value for an imagined common culture and thus contribute to forging pride. In this sense and different from the commemoration of

national heroes and the distribution of monolithic historiography, the harmonizing strategy of promoting national heritage seems to work independently from the relevance people assign to them for their own everyday practices. It therefore seems that harmonizing strategies reach a wider range of people in a cultural context that is less politicized and less connected to the CPV.

Having discussed several harmonizing strategies in the memory politics of the state and people's engagement with them, we finally need to keep in mind that these policies are also subject to change over time. Historical studies on historiography in the DRV (Tréglodé 2012, Pelley 2002) and the creation of HCM's personality cult (Tai 1995) illustrated such drastic changes of historiography and iconography instigated by political elites. People themselves notice such changes in the course of their lifetime. Hung (\*1939, Dong Nai, Cochinchina) for example told me about public reports in Vietnam that revealed that the story about a communist teenage hero Le Van Tam commonly taught in history classes on anti-colonial conflicts was fabricated (l. 154-156). Yet, it is still contained in history textbooks. These examples show the fluctuous nature of communicating memories and the challenges of researching it.

### *7.3.2.3 Power over media and media policies*

Having reviewed citizens' engagement with legitimizing and harmonizing strategies of memory politics in Vietnam, the last subchapter concentrates on the states' resources of control in order to regulate public memory and people's capacities to act on them. Margalit (2002, 11) explained the urge and desire of authoritarian regimes to dominate and regulate collective memory, "because by doing so they exercise monopoly on all sources of legitimacy." Benedict Anderson (2006, 32- 46/113-114) emphasized the special meaning of print media, schools and museums for the imagination of the nation. An authoritarian regime therefore seeks an interest in controlling media as mnemonic agents. In democratic societies, public media have been described positively for their functions of documenting history, providing a repository (e.g. Zelizer/Weinblatt 2014, 2), a forum function (e.g. Neverla/Lohner 2012; Jones 2012; Farinosi/Micalizzi 2016) or sustainable memories for societal caution (Trümper 2018). Media critical views on communicating memories are less frequent. They usually address the socio-technological constraints of SNS, the neoliberal interests of their providers or privacy of data (Kaun/Stiernstedt 2014). Only a handful of scholars have scrutinized the chances and limitations of communicating memories in tightly controlled media environments and authoritarian led societies (Kalinina/Menke 2016; Reifova 2015).

In authoritarian regimes, the state's control over knowledge and public representations of historical narratives and iconography has been described as means to produce "a [Foucauldian] system of truth" that suggests a common collective past (Tappe 2008, 21-23; Kalinina/Menke 2016, 71). Once established, such narratives can be reproduced by people themselves and even dominate discourses in social media (Kalinina/Menke 2016, 70-71).

Norms and legislations for regulating public communication represent a powerful tool to channel and distribute certain types and versions of knowledge while preventing or marginalizing others. As in other authoritarian states, Vietnam's leadership still exercises strong control over the media sector although this power has been somewhat compromised with regard to economic and market interests after *Doi Moi* (see 4.1). Yet, press briefings, censorship and self-censorship are still characteristic for Vietnam's media system and thus public discourse (Cain 2014; Sanko 2016b). Censorship of mass media, including press, books, broadcasting and film, seeks to ensure the success of legitimization and harmonizing strategies of memory politics and to avoid criticism of the Party, communism or communist allies such as China. There is a widespread awareness about the mechanisms of censorship by users, producers and prosumers. The latest cyber laws (Kurfürst 2015; epd 2018) and governmental deals with SNS providers such as Facebook (Pearson 2020) prove of the fact that the leadership in Hanoi still holds on to its control over media, media policies and thus public discourse about past and present. This monopoly over public mnemonic agents makes the authoritarian regime technically one of the most powerful memory agents in terms of assets in communicating memories in public. The recent history of Vietnam has seen waves of stricter and looser enforcement of these measures (Cain 2014), which plays into the fluidity of public memory. Nguyen-Thu (2019, 8) also stressed the complex dynamics between mass media and the state, questioning Vietnamese media's depiction as henchman of the state. In fact, previous research on anniversary journalism in Vietnam supports her argument and has shown journalists' varying practices, including criticism and undermining suppression, in dealing with media regulation (Sanko 2016b, 19).

News media, however, plays only a minor role in urban Vietnamese's MCRs as informants attributed only little relevance to them in their everyday engagement with collective pasts. Constraints due to censorship were more strongly felt by respondents concerning the publication of literature, films, entertainment shows and textbooks for history education (e.g. Hung, Dan, Hai, Binh). The empirical data demonstrates that people throughout the last century developed their own strategies to circumventing the state's media controls and

ensorship, from picking up "the enemy's" radio signal (e.g. Hop, Giang) to buying banned literature on the black market (e.g. Phu). People's hunger for alternate knowledge and sources is not a digital phenomenon. People's motivations to turn to alternate sources about the past is rather a matter of intrinsic interest, socialization, education and social networks than access to technologies.

The empirical data illustrated that respondents applied different strategies in dealing with perceived constraints at the intersection of media and memory politics of the state. While some intentionally turn away from particular mnemonic media shows that they perceive as propagandistic (e.g. Vinh), others seek alternate sources independent from the Vietnamese media system (e.g. Dan) or even try to increase its diversity by clandestine, activist actions (e.g. Kim). Of course, there is also a range of cases whose taste match e.g. the entertainment TV program and who do not complain about censorship or constraints. Entertainment TV is usually not perceived as strongly censored because it appears less political at first sight. Yet, it seems to carry more mnemonic meaning for many than the news. Nguyen-Thu (2019, 42-56) for example pointed out the nostalgic value of soap operas for their viewers. In the interview data, however, people usually did not explicitly regard soap operas as engagements with collective pasts and would rather discuss musical shows, music, end-of-the-year shows, reunion shows and historical fiction as memory-related entertainment formats. The subject of censorship as a means of memory politics appears to be less pressing for these shows. Instead the focus of criticism is rather on aesthetics and production qualities, especially when compared to other Asian or Western productions. People still see enough variety and other options in entertainment programming that they can turn to, making censorship or one-sidedness seem appear less severe.

The findings suggest that middle-class urban Vietnamese as the ones interviewed possess a certain set of assets that strengthen their abilities in contesting constraints (if perceived) through media censorship and propaganda. These assets include their high level of education, mostly internationally received degrees of higher education, their intercultural competence through educational or professional international cooperation, their social status based on income and professional as well as their influential and protective social networks. While every person has the freedom to choose from a variety of media content, not everyone has the same preconditions to access or even distribute alternate knowledge. Technological infrastructure has been less, but still is a gap between social groups, particularly between urban and rural populations. Social networks as Kim's intellectual

circles and connections to publishers empowered her beside her international education to distribute and circulate censored literature. On the other hand, people may have the same assets available, including digital technologies, but without intrinsic motivation will not critically engage with monolithic views on national history (e.g. Nga). And even if people do voice an interest in history with similar assets that does not necessarily lead to more critical views (e.g. Nhung, Quynh). For the latter cases, the reason can be that at least in terms of communicating memories have not left their social and ideological milieus yet (Meyen 2013, 224). It therefore seems that all in all, abilities of dealing critically with censorship of communicating memories depends partially on social status, an awareness about censorship and an curiosity, exposure and openness towards alternate views on collective pasts.

The social status is somewhat less relevant concerning public school education in Vietnam. Despite a few cases of respondents who went to French schools with French curricula before 1954 in the south of Vietnam, most respondents went to public schools. While public school education differed and was more diversified in the RVN, school education in the DRV, including history education was more standardized and followed socialist ideology and was under supervision of the Party (Dror 2018, 58). History textbooks today, still stick to official narratives about the ongoing succession of accomplishments in the development of the country (Großheim 2018). While citizens cannot freely choose the standardized learning material used in class and need to follow the curricula designed by MOET, they yet show clear attitudes towards history education. The wide disinterest in national history as a subject of respondents is partially explained by personal preferences of school subjects. The unpopularity of the subject even encourages students to study abroad (Doan 2005, 458).

In the interview data, people also often complained about the way history is taught and communicated to them. The system of evaluation in schools and higher education institutions enforces students to learn history by heart while alternate interpretations are not appreciated in grading (e.g. Van). The rearticulation of similar historical master narratives and the broad consensus on the importance of particular historical events among respondents approves of standardized history education as a common and usually monolithic source of knowledge about the past. In the educational context, it is only teachers and lecturers who are empowered to break with these standards and/or circumvent censorship regarding the perpetuation of knowledge. The empirical findings demonstrate that teachers take advantage of their social position and challenge public

memory (e.g. Nhung, Kim). Therefore teachers can to some degree undermine the Party's powerful monopoly over history education in their individual classes, presenting themselves as legitimate and authorized mnemonic agents either in their role as experts and/or time witnesses. Time witnesses can also pose a challenge to master narratives and harmonizing strategies or censorship of the state in public mnemonic spaces such as museums and historical sites (e.g. Dan). Anthropological studies approved of role of tourist guides as time witnesses and alternate sources of national history, including challenging views (Schwenkel 2009, 97-100). The credibility of time witnesses as alternate sources to censored or monolithic narratives of history seems similarly strong when they originate from within the family (e.g. An, Phong).

The advent of the Internet and the wide spread of digital media technologies in urban Vietnam can facilitate to circumvent the censorship of communicating memories if people seek to do so. In addition, the empirical data presented cases in which people accidentally encountered alternate views about collective pasts in Vietnam without initial intent of researching about history (e.g. Phu, Nhien, Hai). These coincidental encounters might have become more likely with the limits of exercising full control over online-spheres. While state interventions into public and private online communication is now legalized at least on SNS, respondents interviewed before the law was established did not voice greater concerns about potential monitoring of their own online communication. Only one person reported on an intervention online on the side of website administrators concerning sensitive historical topics (Hai, l. 81). A few, however, did raise concerns about having their critical comments about the state's censorship on public memory recorded in the interview (e.g. Binh, Dan). While the Internet has provided the Vietnamese urban middle-class with an infrastructure that facilitates access to alternate sources of knowledge and information, it does not necessarily free people from self-censorship in communicating certain views. Yet, it did allow for the nurturing of people's transnational and international social networks, realizing cultural traditions despite distances and for and in some cases meeting or mobilizing like-minded people (e.g. An, Kim).

The regulation of the Internet remains a pressing task for the Vietnamese government in order to sustain its power. Internet regulation and censorship in this sense targets all forms of dissent towards the ruling party, including its history. It is concerned with restricting potential access to considered sensitive knowledge about and of the past. It remains to be seen how strictly the state will exercise the new legislations upon its citizens and how people will act on it. We have seen the empowering potential of digital and online media in

the empirical data, particularly through the ability in engaging with less prominent views about collective pasts in Vietnam and beyond. Transnational communication between Vietnamese citizens and members of the Vietnamese diaspora worldwide eased exponentially and thus the potential of negotiating different accounts on the past. Such accounts can result in transnational cooperations with Vietnamese abroad in detecting alternate knowledge, distributing sources or in planning for democratic change (e.g. Kim, Phu).

The discussion showed that despite censorship and regulation of media content in Vietnam, we cannot conclude that the nature of communicating memories publicly in Vietnam is entirely homogeneous and controlled. Despite one-party rule and censorship, people do differentiate between various media outlets, formats and technologies, from which they choose. When discussing people's engagement with memory politics, we need to take into account the variety of media formats and content even if state-controlled, the changes of media regulation over time, the autonomous actions of individuals against the rules and the mnemonic value citizens assign to particular media content and social agents.

The discussion on citizen's engagement with memory politics in Vietnam has shown that people recognize the legitimacy and nation-building project of the state. For holidays or commemorative days, this recognition rarely exceeds their acknowledgement as important days. Usually the perceived mnemonic relevance for everyday life is low and reduced to welcoming leisure time in the course of a busy working schedule. Although not reaching the entire population, particularly in the South, the Ho Chi Minh cult seems to remain one of the most widespread mnemonic phenomena, spanning across provinces, generations, public and private as well as political and spiritual spheres. Yet, people usually differentiate party achievements of the past and present against the intent of the CPV's memory politics. Citizens' general trust and belief in state institutions figured to be crucial on whether people comply with memory politics or not. We have seen that this trust can be challenged by other legitimate mnemonic agents, particularly if their knowledge diverges from the state's historiographic master narratives. We have to acknowledge that this trust or backing of state institution is not solely built upon historical narratives and education, but also in citizens' socialization and thus family history, personal political beliefs and socio-economic status and thus the potential access to other sources of knowledge. If the trust in state institutions is high, sources alternate to state sources, however, will usually receive less credibility. Generally, once the limitations and monolithic perspective of memory politics is noticed due to lacking trust in state institutions, there is room for pluralism of views,

acceptance of different perspectives. This plurality of communicating memories can be facilitated but not established through digital media, especially as long as freedom of speech in Vietnam is not guaranteed.

## **8 Conclusion: Communicating memories — the roots and visions of communal living**

The dissertation posed the main questions of "how Vietnamese urbanites communicate collective memories in the everyday by means of media technologies and in relation to others?" (RQ1) and "how do they make sense of it?" (RQ2).

The thesis presented answers to RQ1 by carving out and typifying the various forms and practices that communicating memories in everyday Vietnam involve (RQ1.1). These range from forms of family, peer, expert or mnemonic group communication to the appropriation of state, historic, entertainment, international, diasporic and social media. These engagements with collective pasts in interaction with others and media comprise practices of acquiring, negotiating or contesting mnemonic content, narratives or policies in Vietnam. The thesis has shown that these practices are based on a range of motivations grounded in past and present contexts (RQ1.2), including the need for information, enjoyment and companionship as well as social and moral obligations. The forms and practices in their range and variety generally occur across generational groups despite media socialization differences. Differences in MCRs surface clearer, however, with regard to music preferences and emotional responses mnemonic content as well as in the evaluation and preference of state media productions (RQ1.3) The intergenerational quality of many MCPs and a condensed media development in Vietnam represent reasons for less clear generational patterns within the empirical data.

Investigating people's motivations to engage in these practices contributed to clarify how people make sense of their own communicative actions (RQ2). At a higher level of abstraction, the dissertation further examined such sense-making processes with respect to social bonds, norms and values as well as civic engagement. How people attribute meaning to their engagements with collective pasts is mirrored in the ways they navigate their social relations, the norms and values they adhere to and wish for as well as their participation in civil society.

Maurice Halbwachs (2008, 38) has argued in his work that memory is collective because it is within "society that [people] recall, recognize and locate" them. While implying that communication as a symbolic process plays a part in collective remembering, Halbwachs' works (1985, 2008) concern more the structural conditions, e.g. class, religion, family, of remembering than the actual practices. Communicating memories in Vietnam has shown that communication as a symbolic process and its entailed practices are not only central but a precondition of constituting collective memories in a given social group or society. Without communication that is brought into practice as social interaction, memory would not be collective and remain a cognitive phenomenon hardly traceable for social scientists. In conceptualizing **communicating memories** as a social phenomenon and developing a heuristic of **mnemonic communication repertoires** (MCRs) based on it, the dissertation suggested theoretical and empirical ways of tracing communicative aspects of collective memory at the micro level. This understanding and approach differs from other prominent practice-oriented concepts such as "mediated memories" (van Dijck 2007) or "memory work" (Lohmeier/Pentzold 2014) because it explicitly includes face-to-face communication as prime socialization factor and less conscious engagements with collective pasts in the everyday.

As results of reconstructing urban Vietnamese's MCRs on the basis of empirical data and thoroughly discussing their implications for social memory and communication research, the dissertation draws the following five points of conclusion:

**(1) Communicating memories in the everyday is transcommunicative because it rests upon more general social needs and motivations in people's lifeworlds.** The typology of practices have revealed these motivations, showing that communicating memories occurs not always for the sake of remembering in a narrower sense. Neither is it led by an obvious quest for identity. Instead, in the less abstract context of the everyday, people engage with collective pasts because they seek, encounter or have to appropriate knowledge to unresolved questions (informing); they want to share past experiences for educational reasons (moral educating) or for companionship; they seek entertainment (entertaining) or career opportunities (participating in institutionalized memory work). This meta-character of communicating memories in the everyday explains why individuals encounter collective pasts on so many levels in their daily lives.

People's ways of engaging with collective pasts occur across various forms of communication. Face-to-face and mass-mediated forms represented the most relevant and most diversified encounters with the past in informants' lifeworlds, particularly in familial,

educational and professional settings. The various communicative forms can appear unrelated, but can also complement each other — thematically, sensuously and imaginably — or contrast each other. In negotiating, people either harmonize, reject or accept the coexistence of diverging views or narratives about collective pasts.

The constellation and combination of these various forms largely depends on the prior availability of certain media technologies, thematic preferences, obligations and ideological attitudes that evolved throughout respondents' socializations. War and post-war scarcity, for example, have prevented that printed photographs or home video have become widely established mnemonic records of family life and history, especially for elder and middle-aged informants. Yet, these shortages or differences in media socialization do not result in a notable difference in the range of media used at present. With very few exceptions, respondents of all age groups utilize the full range of media technologies to engage with collective pasts. It is, however, remarkable that younger informants, who already grew up with a vast variety of media technologies and productions, including Western, Chinese, Japanese and Korean ones, tend to have greater expectations on production quality and aesthetics of mnemonic content. The discrepancies between their urban lifeworlds and representations of public memory surface more clearly than in the other age groups.

Music as a naturally transcommunicative cultural form stands out for its emotional weight among respondents. It can be localized more clearly in time (mostly biographically) than most of the other mnemonic media forms. Music is not only connected to sentiments felt at a certain time but also about others. It therefore does not only indicate musical preferences but also the nature of social relations in the past. Replaying or listening to music again can lead people re-experience that specific emotive state. Respondents, however, have not expressed such a deliberate use but the emotive state reached them rather unprepared. The emotional weight of music qualifies it as a mnemonic form that is particularly longterm and easily provokes recalls of anecdotal knowledge and intimate memories. For future research, it therefore seems a recommendable methodological means to elicit more ready, spontaneous and detailed responses about informants' pasts.

Mnemonic communication practices (MCPs) that make use of these forms are likewise transcommunicative. That means in other words that although there are certain tendencies, a practice cannot simply be reduced to one single form or vice versa. Prime practices and thus motivations to engage with collective memories include informing about the past, commemorating the past, moral educating and entertaining through the past. While occurring predominantly in intimate and educational settings, informing, commemorating

and moral educating also cut through social levels and reference points — from family and peer group to the nation. That is also one reason for why the spheres of the private and public, the familial and the national, leisure and professional, the spiritual and political spheres transcend in people's MCRs. Communicating memories is a hybrid phenomenon in all these spheres and therefore at the heart of everyday experience. That seems particularly true for socialist societies in which the state and its memory politics intervene strongly in people's everyday lives (e.g. recreational team-building trips to historical sites from work - *Chuyen di tham quan du lich*).

One cultural peculiarity of MCPs is ancestor worship and the underlying ideas of extended family that stretches over generations and the conceived interconnectedness of the worlds of the living and the dead. The ancestor and death cult poses a challenge to Western conceptions of communication. Commemorating and thus interacting with the dead in ritualized ways require a wider understanding of communication; not least because the dead are believed to have a direct impact on the world of the living. Ancestor worship is indicative of the second following central finding.

**(2) Communicating memories in the everyday primarily originates from and reaffirms thick ties.** Margalit (2002, 8) argues that "Memory is the cement that holds thick relations together and communities of memory are the obvious habitat for thick relations [...]." The dissertation showed on several accounts that the family is the prime socialization agent, when it comes to communicating memories. Similar to Leonhard's (2002, 291-297) and Welzer et al.'s (2002, 13-15) observations, the family sets the basis and the tone for communicating memories before any other socialization agent such as schools or media. Children are soon introduced into cultural family rituals that involve the family's history. Such rituals include mainly commemorating the ancestors on death anniversaries or cultural holidays or moral educating through family anecdotes. Communication about the ancestral lines and forebears creates the foundation of someone's being. The shared ritual and episodic knowledge thereby serves mostly the purpose of raising good and respectful human beings. For that reason, family stories in this pedagogical context more often focused on characteristics and behavior of other family members as role models than their role in history. The ritual repetition of commemorating and moral educating reaffirms the family bonds in a cyclic rhythm.

We have seen in this dissertation that the family often serves as reference point or means of orientation. Some of the musical tastes for example were inherited from parents or grandparents. We cannot claim, however, that a special interest in history would be passed

on over generations within the family. The telling or keeping silent about certain historical topics and family histories usually inspires further research or consultation of other sources in reaction to the nature of the respective family communication. Keeping secrets or marginalized collective memories within the family because they publicly find no hear, attests particularly strong ties.

The persistence and high value attributed to these thick ties within the family become explicitly apparent in cases of negotiating of contrasting views on collective memory within the same family. In the majority of these cases, the plurality of views would be accepted or sensitive issues avoided for the sake of familial harmony and protecting the social bonds of the family. Avoidance strategies were found notably with regard to traumatic memories or those of politically sensitive nature. From an intergenerational perspective, the lack of perpetuating these memories forges collective forgetting, which is not always considered negatively as a loss but also as an opportunity for the formation of something new (Connerton 2008).

Further, the dissertation demonstrated that practices of online communication or mediated interpersonal communication served primarily to stay in touch with family members abroad, sometimes even to exercise family rituals over distance, instead of reaching out to strangers. In the context of communicating memories, online communication therefore most often served to sustain already existing social ties.

The same holds true for peer networks. Many of the Vietnamese urban middle class respondents' biographies are marked by professional and educational mobility. The networks built abroad or that existed at home during that time were and usually are still nurtured through communication online and offline. Reminiscing about a commonly experienced past stands in the foreground of these interactions. Similar to families, we have seen that friendship ties withstood ideological differences through avoidance strategies, stressing a commonly lived past instead. The intimate circles of like-minded friends also served as a safe space to discuss contested, e.g. anti-communist views on Vietnam's history.

**(3) Communicating memories in the everyday mirrors social hierarchies and value orientations.** Brad West (2016, 455) stated that the social relevance of memory lies in its meaning and reflections of social order. The frameworks and structures maintaining this order have also been Halbwachs' (1985, 2008) main interest. The dissertation supports West's (2016, 455) statement, as it elicited concrete social conventions and norms of communicating memories in Vietnam. The value of family unity described previously comes with the adherence to certain rules that sustain the order within the family as a social

unit. Concepts of seniority and Confucian values of filial piety (*hieu*) and moral debt (*on*) are key to the order of the family. Altogether, they privilege elder family members and require younger ones to respect them and their actions by obedience. As a result, communicating memories, especially in regard to informing, commemorating and moral educating, is strongly hierarchical and asymmetric. Elder family members usually initiate mnemonic talks or coordinate family rituals. It is them who set the agenda for conversations and who decide which stories remain untold. Questioning elders' decisions, remarks or behavior would equal disrespecting their role in the family. These norms of communicating memories puts elderly in a position of high authority over collective pasts. In regard to 20th century history in Vietnam, time witnesses's value is twofold. Their authority is not only based on their actual life experience with certain events but also on their age and thus rank in society. Some younger respondents reported about a more open dialogic culture within their families, so the degree of openness and adherence to traditional roles also varies to some extent among younger urban families.

Seniority and authority were similarly significant in the teacher-student relationship. Teachers represented figures of respect and inspiration. The relationship is usually more intimate than in Western contexts. Their seniority and expert status leave teachers with the power to set the tone in what is taught. On several instances, the dissertation revealed that, although civil servants, teachers would sometimes diverge from dominant narratives of public memory and thus provided spaces for communicating deviant or sensitive collective memories. We have seen similar cases within families. The principle of seniority and social norms therefore grant elderly and educated people in Vietnamese society with a power and authority that they would also sometimes use to voice contested collective memories. In such cases, the family or educational contexts can also work against intended memory politics of the state.

Social hierarchies are further reflected in informants' felt obligation of exercising certain mnemonic communication practices. That means that not all MCPs in the everyday are fully voluntary but rest on a perceived need of moral or professional nature. Moral obligation goes hand in hand with fulfilling *hieu* and *on*. Within the family moral obligation is often expressed with regard to ancestor worship and therefore commemorating of deceased forebears. It also finds articulation in a declared gratitude towards parents and grandparents generations, e.g. for their efforts in bringing peace to the country. Showing gratitude in communicating memories as moral obligation transcends family boundaries and also applies to revolutionary veterans or considered national heroes such as Ho Chi

Minh. In this regard, social norms deriving from basic Confucian values and customs of ancestor worship facilitate to nurture a state-initiated, heroic personality cult that is meant to sustain order within society as a whole.

Yet, the dissertation has shown that the adherence to these norms is not absolute. At state level, the dissertation revealed cases in which the power and the hegemonic style of memory politics was questioned or even criticized. Some informants stated their own normative views about how public memory should be represented. These normative views can be understood as those people's moral claims of how one should publicly remember independent of their own MCRs. These claims include completeness of information, plurality and accuracy of information. From an ethical point of view, communicating memories is therefore not only adhering to social norms but also negotiating norms and the values they are based on. While parents and grandparents' moral integrity is rarely called into question, postwar policies and contemporary corruption cases raised doubts towards the leadership among a few informants. The resulting loss in trust threatens the stability of social order. Communicating memories can therefore only consolidate social hierarchies if they meet people's value orientations and trust in state institutions.

Beside moral obligation, another kind of perceived necessity of communicating memories arises from professional incentives or a combination of both. As civil servants, some respondents for example took part in commemorative practices as part of their job. Students at school or university have to study e.g. the history of the CPV in order to pass their school year. Voluntary student activities and summer campaigns (*Mùa hè xanh*) as e.g. free tourist guides at historical sites are rewarded with additional credits at university. Employers encourage team-building trips (*Chuyen di tham quan du lich*) that can include historical sightseeing. The degree of voluntary engagement is hard to estimate because respondents were more likely to see the leisure and career benefits in them instead of their mnemonic implications. All these measures aim at harmonizing social relations and raising good citizens according to communist ideology. Overall, the dissertation does not indicate that changes in media development would have fundamentally altered or toppled these basic social norms and the resulting social hierarchies. Often teachers and family remain in the position to give the first impetus of engaging with collective pasts.

**(4) Communicating memories is civic engagement.** The previous examples in the educational and professional contexts demonstrate that communicating memories can be understood as a more general contribution of common good to society. Engaging with the past in this sense is not limited to the familial or educational setting but addresses larger

segments of society. Previously mentioned summer campaigns, team-building trips as well as the heroic personality cult are state measures to harmonize collective memories and spread the sense of a common origin of Vietnamese people.

While I have pointed out the career benefits of some of these actions, other informants acted on ideational and political accounts. In the research material, civic engagement surfaced more clearly in normative views and discussions on cultural heritage and state memory politics as harmonizing strategies. Opinions about cultural heritage elicit a stronger alienation of young urbanites with values of rural life. They interest in folkmusic, historical exhibitions and revolutionary anniversary content dwindles. A few middle-aged respondents actively took part in preserving cultural arts and customs that they connect with an idea of Vietnamese-ness. Harmonizing strategies in memory politics tend to reach a wider range of people when situated in a cultural, less politicized context.

Subversive practices to hegemonial collective memory appeared more subtle in the authoritarian environment of Vietnam. In some cases, they would simply materialize in forms of rejecting ideological content. Openly politically motivated MCPs exist but are rare in the interview data. The few contesting practices such as anti-communist stances are usually kept small-scale and within intimate circles. The political engagement therefore stays usually under the radar and cautious about threads of surveillance and political persecution.

The dissertation introduced one rare case of political activism that amongst others aimed at expanding the literary canon on Vietnam's past and the history of communism. It needs to be noted that this kind of civic engagement is limited to intellectual circles and therefore is also a matter of educational level, personal relations and thus of class. The impact of these activist civic engagement cannot be estimated. It is noteworthy, however, that transnational ties also play a key role for this kind of activism, as they often assisted to provide censored materials.

##### **(5) Communicating memories embodies roots and visions of communal living.**

If communicating memories consolidates social bonds, negotiates common values, adheres to social norms and represents civic engagement, then these are arguments that speak for communicating memories to be considered as roots of communal living. By communal living, I refer to the outcome of what sociologists have described as processes of social cohesion or integration (Leonhard 2014, Schimank 2005) and thus the associative forces of communicating memories. The dissertation illustrated that communicating memories constitutes and reaffirms social bonds through common experience, ritual and knowledge

and shared senses of belonging. That has been true primarily for the social unity of the family; in Confucian thought regarded as a microcosm of society. Following that school of thought, those who are not a respected family member cannot become a good citizen in society. Those who do not value and worship their ancestral origins within the family will be lost in society. While the social reality of urban Vietnamese is certainly more complex, this basic principle seems to remain a guiding concept to harmonize the relations within families and a once separated, vastly changing society.

The dissertation explored Vietnam as a society in transition — transitions were prompted through several ruptures throughout the country's history. These ruptures include decades of warfare, separation and political transformations. The thesis illustrated that these ruptures have left scars and divisions not only at societal but also at family and peer level. Yet, we have seen that the social bonds based on common experience and common reminiscence about them also outweigh ideological differences. For the sake of peaceful communal living and remaining an integral part of these social groups, people rather choose to "forget" points of division than threatening these ties. People already grow up with commemorative rituals that make them aware of the value of their ancestor's efforts in the past; knowing that they do not only owe the living but also the dead. Moral debt in this regard requires a constant awareness about one's roots in the everyday that constitute their social relations and senses of belonging.

Similarly to the family, the state leadership aimed at forging a common national identity through memory politics to overcome and veil divisions that have always been part of Vietnam's history and society. The communist leadership's nation-building project, propagating a distinct version of public collective memory, has been supposed to forge a common sense of belonging based on a common past. The aim is to secure good relations between the state as the ruler and its citizens and thus to maintain social order. Sustaining social order shall guarantee the peaceful communal living of a people who have hardly ever been united in Vietnam's fractured history (Dror 2017, 126).

It can be argued that this nation-building project realized through memory politics has been successful in so far that hegemonial narratives are publicly still in place and rarely openly questioned. The data indicated that there is no open or public dispute about different versions of collective pasts in local communities, particularly in the southern part of Vietnam. At an individual level, however, we have seen that for some the facade of an allegedly common past deteriorates or has never worked in the first place. That leads to alienation with a national past as represented by the CPV. This alienation does not only

occur among those whose memories are publicly marginalized, denounced or silenced but also among those young Vietnamese urbanites who see little points of identification with the communist narration of national history and their own media-saturated, career-driven and globally oriented lifeworlds. The reconstruction of urban Vietnamese's MCRs showed that while some align with dominant narratives, some do not have interest or voice a lack of knowledge which hints at persisting fractures within a supposedly united nation and society at peace. Such incidents of conflict, contestation and negotiation reflect the highly normative nature of communicating memories and in return tell us about how people envision communal living within changing societies. Future research needs to further assess whether these fissures surface at larger scale and within or between other segments of Vietnamese society. A larger data set would allow to investigate whether particular sets of MCPs coincide with certain types of people and to draw more distinct conclusion at societal level.

While the dissertation has focused primarily on communicating memories as social interaction and its meaning for social relations, the complexities of forging and constructing different identities of "Vietnameseness" through collective remembering remain another future task for research in this field. The thesis provided several starting points to further elaborate on the relation of communicating memories and identity formation, particularly with regard to reflected values and norms, evaluations of national heritage and national heroes as well as civic engagement.

As an interdisciplinary endeavor, this project has drawn from various academic disciplines and now adds its own contributions to these fields. This thesis contributed to theorizations of collective memory by conceptualizing the social phenomenon of **communicating memories** as a process of communicative appropriation in the everyday. It describes the ways people appropriate knowledge, content and narratives and thereby create meaning about collective pasts. The dissertation thereby specified the broad notion of collective memory and developed an approach that caters to researchers of communicative practices, media use, audiences, media appropriation and reception. On the other hand, it assists memory researchers to theoretically integrate communication as an integral process of bringing collective memories into being.

The conceptualization of communicating memories yet went beyond theoretically situating the phenomenon in memory studies and communication research. The dissertation utilized the conceptual determination to develop a heuristics of **mnemonic communication repertoires** in order to assess communicating memories empirically. This practice-oriented

heuristic adds to other repertoire-oriented research on memory (Finger 2017; Krogsgaard 2017) and provides an explorative and culturally sensitive tool to conduct memory and communication research in less investigated cultural settings. As it is oriented towards individual's subjective sense-making of their own communicative actions, the heuristic also suits research on cultural environments that are not the researcher's own. Moreover, it does not force a prior decision upon binary concepts of private and public that have preoccupied memory and media studies for a long time. It rather allows to examine the variety and interconnections of different forms of communicating memories. We have seen that in the everyday, various social levels and contexts — family, peers, coworkers, state — and degrees of publicity or privacy conflate. The dissertation presses the need for further empirical research on transcommunicative connections instead of examining a single medium, show or online forum. Such an approach also pays tribute to the enhanced complexity of media-saturated or mediatized lifeworlds.

In prior empirical memory and communication research, practice-oriented and media use perspective are still less common and even more so in regard to post- or late socialist societies. The thesis systemized the state of the art, diagnosing that few actually draw from media socialization research as one of the fields that integrates biographic (media) experiences and life course events and bears much potential for future research on communicating memories.

The dissertation also demonstrated that Vietnam as a post-colonial, post-conflict and late socialist society is an under-researched area in memory studies and communication research alike. This PhD research added rare empirical data to both these disciplines as well as to historically and anthropologically driven Vietnamese studies. While the latter rarely focused on people's communication practices as cultural or social practices, the thesis now offers concrete data and insights on everyday communication and media use in Vietnam. Exploring urban Vietnamese lifeworlds furthermore added to the disciplinary effort of de-Westernizing communication and media research (Thussu 2017; Waisbord/Mellado 2014; Gunaratne 2010) as well as of broadening the scope of Cold War studies (Kwon 2010).

## 9 Appendix

### 9.1 Means of data collection

#### 9.1.1 Interview guidelines

##### Introduction

Xin chao, em/anh/chi/co/chu/ong/ba! Toi ten la Christina Sanko (và day là my interpreter XY). Toi làm-viec o Truong Dai hoc Bremen o Đức (as a researcher and PhD candidate). Currently I am on a research trip here in Vietnam and work at Dai hoc Quoc Gia Ha Noi - Truong Dai hoc Khoa hoc Xã hoi và Nhân van (DHQGHN). The project is concerned with the role of history and the past in your culture and how these are mediated. It was awarded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), so that I can cooperate with Truong Dai hoc Khoa hoc Xã hoi và Nhân van (DHQGHN) and have the opportunity to conduct interviews here.

I lived in Vietnam for one year myself (Toi da song o Viet Nam mot nam.) and was able to get to know your country and culture. However, many questions have still remained that I would like to research on. Thanks for helping me to answer such questions. There are no right or wrong answers in this interview, though. Instead it is concerned with your personal views and experiences. The interview will last about 1 or 2 hours.

For the following analysis of the interview, I need to record it and write it down. Thus I can follow our conversation more carefully and I will not be distracted by taking notes. Of course, the interview data are strictly confidential and will be made anonymous, so your person cannot be identified.

> *start recording* <

To analyze the interview, I now need your approval on the just explained recording and use of the data. Is that ok for you?

##### 1. story-telling prompt

I would kindly ask you, to tell me about the course of your life story. You can start with your birth and childhood, and then continue with what has happened afterwards until to the present day. You can take your time while talking, also for details. Everything that is important to you is interesting for me.

Anchor: How was your life as a student?

## 2. follow-up phase I - questions depending on informant's narrative

> ambiguities, ambivalences, details

> focus (if mentioned) on:

- time of adolescence (as formative years; time of school/university/work);
- Media memories
- communicative practices/contents (e.g. certain events) of remembering
- intergenerational communication;
- processes of change in cultural memory (dealing with past "then" and "today")

> *creative element I* (Meyen 2011, 109) (identity):

sorting cards according to importance: relationship/family; friends/neighbors; free time/hobbies; work/career/studies; politics/society; arts/culture; personal origin (roots)/traditions; religion; media; "other" (empty card)

- If you look at these cards, then you see different areas of life. Please bring them into an order according to their importance for you and explain the order you have chosen.

## 3. follow-up phase II - questions according to research interest

> MEDIA USE / MEDIA BIOGRAPHY

- How does a typical week day look like for you from morning till evening? What activities are you occupied with? (routines)
- How do you inform yourself about the past (and recent happenings)? How do you learn about it?
- Do you feel well informed and could something be different in your opinion?
- Many people capture moments of their life and share them with others. How about you?
- What kind of media do you use these days? How often and for what reason?
- With whom are you using media?
- When did you use these media for the first time? Can you describe the situation?
- What has changed since then?
- Which important information/knowledge has reached you through media in the past?
- Which (mediated) news or pictures have impressed or struck you the most (in your adolescence)?
- Which events in your culture that have been presented on TV/in newspapers/on radio/or the internet, do you remember well? any other?
  - How was it like, when you followed these events in the media?
  - What else did you do in this situation?

- What have you talked about back then and where?
- What significance does this event have for you back then and today? What impact did it have on you?
- What do you think would have been different, if you had been there yourself or no?
- Do you have relatives or friends, who experienced the event? What do they say?
- What current broadcasts on tv/radio or stories in the newspaper or internet remind you of the past?

#### > VISUAL ELICITATION

> *creative element II* (media events; media memories):

showing pre-selected press photographs

- I have brought some pictures (from vietnamese press). What do you associate with these pictures? 1 heroic person, 1 monument, 1 cultural event (ethnic minorities), 1 cultural heritage location (ancient village), 1 historical film (on revolution)
- What role do media play when it comes to remembering certain events in your opinion?
- How do media contribute to preserving the history and culture of your country in your opinion?

> *creative element III*: available photographs

- I recognized that/Do you have some photographs on display in your house. What meaning do they have to you? (ggf. Nachfrage Ahnenkult)

#### > INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

- A vietnamese saying is: "uong nuoc nho nguon". What does it mean to you?
- What role does the family play when it comes to passing on stories/traditions in your culture?
- What (traditional stories/information/knowledge) has passed on to you by your grand parents / parents / (and what not?)
- What have you learned from the media only?
- What stories/information/knowledge do/will you pass on to your children and what not?
- What is characteristic for your generation in your opinion?
- What do you think about the young people/old people today?

- Many vietnamese families have relatives abroad. How is a common past and past events discussed between them?
- Do you sometimes talk about the past within the family sometimes? What are these discussions about?
- Which topics are not mentioned within the family (regarding the past)?
  
- Which commemoration days/holidays (related to the past) are important for the family and what do you usually do on such days?
  - Which commemorative festivities do you and your family attend regularly? Why or why not? What is your opinion on such festivities?
  - Do you also follow such festivities in the media? If so, which ones and can you describe the situation? How does that usually proceed?
  
- Do you and your family regularly go on trips together to places that are important to you? If yes, which places are these? Which places would you not go back to?
  - What do you usually do at such places? What do you usually talk about, when you are there?

> PROCESSES OF CHANGE (DISCONTINUITIES)

- Which historical events and developments were particularly important for your culture and what has changed because of them?
- Which changes did these historical events and developments bring for you personally?
- In what way did the development of communication and media technology has changed the life in Vietnam in your opinion?
- Do people deal differently with the past (origin, traditions, war and colonial past, pre-history) today then in former days?
- ( In what way did traditions change? )

> NATIONAL HISTORY/HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

- What meaning does history, tradition, etc. have for your culture?
- Which role does the history of Vietnam play in your personal life?
- Where do you get information about the history of your country? What did you learn at school / university and how?
- What do you expect from a good history book? What should not be missing?
- What should children in Vietnam learn about the history of their country and how?
- Which events and developments of the country and the culture are still commemorated today and how?
- Which public places of memory do exist and what do you think about them?
- What aspects of the past should be strengthened in public, esp. the media? Is something neglected?

- What do you think about initiatives in the country to preserve the legacy of the countries past? Do you know about such initiatives?
- What should foreign media report on Vietnam? If I was a German journalist, what should I report on Vietnam/Vietnamese culture?
- What does (collective) remembering mean to you personally?

**outro:**

**We have now talked a long time about you, your culture and history. Is there anything we have forgotten? Would you like to add something now that we have come to an end?** - And can I contact you again, in case I forgot something?

> stop recording <

> *filling in the questionnaire*

> *presenting gift, voucher*

**after the interview:**

> *Memory log* for contextual information: Habitus, clothing, apartment/office equipment, family circumstances, material situation (Meyen et al. 2011, 86); special features

## 9.1.2 Visual elicitation elements: VNA press photographs

Press photograph	Description
<b>1) Vo Nguyen Giap</b> Le Courrier Du Vietnam, No. 42/2013, cover page	On October 4th, 2013, Vo Nguyen Giap died at the age of 102 in Hanoi. In official historiography of the country he is heralded as the military mastermind behind the decisive battle of Dien Bien Phu against French colonial troops. Vo Nguyen Giap continued to be a major military figure and political companion of the DRV's Ho Chi Minh during the Second Indochina War. The cover picture of LCV shows a black-and-white close-up of Giap's face and upper body. The background of the picture is a collage of historical black-and-white photographs that show several incidents in the history of the revolution Giap was involved in.
<b>2) Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum</b> Le Courrier Du Vietnam, No. 32/2013, p. 23	The second picture is a smaller, black-and-white picture in the news section of Viet Nam News, showing the HCM mausoleum in the center and the surrounding Ba Dinh square. A parade takes place on the square.
<b>3) Martyrs' Day</b> Viet Nam News, July 22, 2013, cover page	Another small black-and-white news photograph in the upper left corner of a Viet Nam News news page depicts a handshake between a politician and a war veteran in order to show activities taking place on July 27th every year, the annual day to commemorate revolutionary veterans
<b>4) Dong Son village</b> Viet Nam News, July 7, 2013, cover page	The picture shows the entrance gate to the ancient village of Dong Son in Thanh Hoa Province. Behind the village gate a narrow path lined by walls and small houses leads towards the village center.
<b>5) Nguyen Hue Street with Ho Chi Minh statue in HCMC</b> Viet Nam News, July 24, 2013, p. 3	The photograph shows the former Hotel de Ville in Saigon, now used as a building for the People's Committee in the city centre (Quan 1) of HCMC.
<b>6) Vi giam folk song performance in Nghe An</b> Viet Nam News, May 17, 2014, p. 21	The press photograph interviews depicts the performance of traditional regional folk in the central region of Nghe An. This culture comes with a particular style of clothing, singing, dancing and playing instruments visible in the picture.
<b>7) Phan Boi Chau movie</b> Le Courrier du Vietnam, No. 40/2013, p. 28	The following picture was originally published in color in LCV and is actually an advertisement of a television production on public television (VTV). It shows two actors, one of whom represents Phan Boi Chau, a leading Communist figure and Vietnamese intellectual during French colonial times. The other actor represents his Japanese partner in the effort of establishing international relations.
<b>8) Dinh Nup statue in Tay Nguyen</b> Le Courrier du Vietnam, No. 28/2013, p. 29	The last picture in the sequence of images is a cover picture of LCV's cultural section. It is a collage with the statue of revolutionary hero Dinh Nup at its center.

Table 6: Visual elicitation: picture descriptions

## 9.1.3 Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE (anonymous):

case no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Sociodemography			
Gender	Male	Female	n.a.
Age			

**Please check! (only 1 answer!)**

marital status	single	
	married	
	divorced	
	widowed	
	other	

How many persons do belong to your household/live with you?	
---	--

Do you have children?	No	Yes	no.:
-----------------------	----	-----	------

Which confession/religion are you a member of?	
--	--

What is your highest school degree (general basic education)?	
---	--

What is your professional degree/graduation? (professional/vocational education)	
--	--

What kind of employment/job do you currently have? (also indicate if none!)	
---	--

**How often per week do you use the following media on average? (in hours)**

Television \_\_\_\_\_

Radio \_\_\_\_\_

Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

Internet: \_\_\_\_\_

social media (facebook, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

blogs \_\_\_\_\_

other (please indicate!) \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: excl. Internet: \_\_\_\_\_ incl. Internet: \_\_\_\_\_

**With who and where do you usually use the following media?**

Television

---

Radio

---

Newspaper

---

Internet:

---

social media (facebook, etc.):

---

blogs

---

other

---

Mobile

---

Which newspapers do you read regularly (please indicate if online or offline)?	
---	--

Which tv broadcasts/shows do you watch regularly?	
--	--

Which radio broadcasts/shows do you listen to regularly?	
---	--

Which internet websites do you visit regularly?	
---	--

Which media do you use if you want to inform yourself about past events/happenings?	
---	--

**Please check! (more than one answer possible!)**

Why do you mainly use media? I use them, because...	... I want to present myself.	
	...they serve my professional needs and for my work.	
	...I want to kill time, when I am bored.	
	... I want to capture moments and archive things that I need or want to retrieve later again.	
	... I want to be entertained/have fun.	
	... I want to educate/inform myself.	
	... I want to relax.	
	... I want to communicate with others and foster relationships.	
	other:	

Thanks for your participation!

## 9.2 Analysis

### 9.2.1 Overview of MCPs and their characteristics

MCP of acquirement	Definition	Characteristics	subforms (e.g.)
informing	Practices that aim at a new gain, addition or complementation of information about the past through engagements with media or others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• across com. forms</li> <li>• hierarchical</li> <li>• conditioned by prior knowledge, credibility of source</li> <li>• differ in motivation, interest, involvement</li> <li>• other's narratives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• researching historical information</li> <li>• listening to familial stories</li> <li>• studying at school</li> </ul>
moral educating	Practices that use historical information or past experiences to intentionally educate others by making a moral standpoint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily face-to-face</li> <li>• primarily educational and familial setting</li> <li>• hierarchical</li> <li>• stories/characteristics of elder family members/members of society</li> <li>• proverbs/folktales</li> <li>• own and others' narratives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (grand-)parental educating</li> <li>• school educating</li> </ul>
entertaining	Practices that are leisure time uses of past-related media content and serve individuals' enjoyment, excitement and (re-)imagining of past times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily mass-media</li> <li>• differ in preference and frequency</li> <li>• conditioned by aesthetics, production quality and affects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• watching historical fiction</li> <li>• listening to music</li> </ul>
commemorating	Practices that serve to keep the memory of a past event or deceased person alive in present contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• across com. forms</li> <li>• highly normative, following moral values and standards</li> <li>• hierarchical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commemorating familial ancestors</li> <li>• commemorating national heroes</li> </ul>
sharing	Practices of reciprocal exchange about collective pasts that are geared towards building, nurturing or reaffirming social ties within a particular group or social relation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily interpersonal com.</li> <li>• reciprocal</li> <li>• flat hierarchy</li> <li>• specific address to group or person</li> <li>• primarily between existing social ties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing photographs</li> <li>• talking about common experiences</li> </ul>
creating/archiving	Practices that aim at producing organizing or preserving media objects as mnemonic records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily photographic practices</li> <li>• preceding and adding to practices of informing, commemorating and sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking photographs</li> <li>• archiving photographs</li> </ul>
participating	Practices that aim at the involvement in institutional mnemonic agendas and initiatives as a leisure activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily mass media and face-to-face</li> <li>• require high commitment or strong identification with organization or agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publishing for state media</li> <li>• participating in college campaigns</li> <li>• participating in team-building trips</li> </ul>

Table 7: Overview of MCPs of acquirement

MCP of negotiation	Definition	Characteristics	subforms (e.g.)
complementing	Practices that are applied when people miss certain bits of information or features in a particular MCR component. They aim at filling those particular gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• across forms of com.</li> <li>• media specificity matters</li> <li>• concerns information or sensory impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complementing information</li> <li>• complementing visual impressions</li> </ul>
discussing	Practices that directly or indirectly negotiate clashing views about the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily interpersonal communication</li> <li>• concerns sensitive topics and counter views of public memory</li> <li>• primarily in intimate settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing traumatic memories</li> <li>• discussing positive aspects of the RVN</li> </ul>
witnessing	Practices of encountering debates over collective pasts without taking an active part in the discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily interpersonal communication</li> <li>• mark incidents of irritation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• witnessing forum discussions</li> <li>• witnessing mocking</li> </ul>
avoiding	Practices that serve the purpose to harmonize existing social relations by preventing a clash of opinions or keeping secrets about the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily interpersonal communication</li> <li>• intentional</li> <li>• purposefully selective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoiding political issues</li> <li>• omitting traumatic memories</li> <li>• remaining silent</li> </ul>

Table 8: Overview of MCPs of negotiation

MCP of contestation	Definition	Characteristics	subforms (e.g.)
rejecting	Non-use or practices that result in discarding ideological mnemonic content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily mass media</li> <li>• conditioned by credibility of source, interest</li> <li>• does not require actual reception or media contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rejecting perceived propaganda</li> <li>• rejecting monolithic content</li> <li>• rejecting repetitive content</li> </ul>
appropriating alternate memories	Practices of appropriating and sharing alternate and suppressed memories concentrate on researching, consuming and spreading knowledge about the past that is not represented in hegemonic narratives and content of state institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• across forms of com.</li> <li>• motivated by personal interest or dissatisfaction with dominant collective memory</li> <li>• sometimes politically motivated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• researching historical information alternate to mainstream</li> <li>• distributing alternate media</li> </ul>
criticizing communism	Practices that disapprove of communism as a political ideology and party politics of the CPV in past and present.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• primarily interpersonal communication</li> <li>• primarily intimate settings</li> <li>• based on negative life experience with communism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• joking about communism</li> <li>• criticizing party politics</li> <li>• discussing clashes with the CPV</li> </ul>

Table 9: Overview of MCPs of contestation

## 9.2.2 Summary of categories

FORMS of mnemonic communication (MCR components)
<p><b>direct com. face-to-face</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family conversation</li> <li>ancestor worship</li> <li>direct communication with experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historic tour guide</li> <li>conversation with time witness</li> <li>com. with peers</li> <li>conversations with teacher</li> <li>guided tour (tourism)</li> </ul> </li> <li>singing</li> </ul>
<p><b>mass-mediated, standardized com.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>educational media</li> <li>historical popular media</li> <li>documentaries</li> <li>anniversary content</li> <li>museums, exhibitions</li> </ul> </li> <li>Western media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>movies</li> <li>documentaries</li> <li>books</li> <li>search engines</li> </ul> </li> <li>Asian media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>historical popular media</li> <li>books</li> </ul> </li> <li>music <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>red</li> <li>yellow</li> <li>folk</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>mediated interpersonal com.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>photographs</li> <li>transnational mediated communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e-mail</li> <li>calls</li> <li>SNS</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>family communication</li> <li>communal com.</li> <li>online group com.</li> <li>mnemonic group com.</li> <li>peer com.</li> </ul>

PRACTICES of mnemonic communication (MCPs)
<p><b>practices of acquirement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participating in inst. memorywork</li> <li>sharing and networking</li> <li>entertaining</li> <li>sharing experience</li> <li>archiving</li> <li>informing</li> <li>moral education</li> <li>commemoration</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">ancestor worshipping</li> </ul>
<p><b>practices of negotiation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complementing</li> <li>witnessing disputes over contentious memories</li> <li>discussing contentious memories</li> <li>avoiding disputes over contentious memories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>depoliticizing contentious memories</li> <li>avoiding public discourse over contentious memories</li> <li>avoiding private dispute over contentious memories</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>practices of contestation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>non-use/rejection of ideological contents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rejecting memories of violent conflict</li> <li>rejection of state media</li> </ul> </li> <li>appropriating alternate, suppressed memories</li> <li>criticizing/ridiculing communism</li> </ul>
<p>forgetting as non-practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of family talk</li> <li>perceived irrelevance of topic</li> <li>saturation with dominant topics</li> </ul>

NARRATIVES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>articulating alternative views</li> <li>complying with standardized, official narratives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre post 1975</li> <li>national identity</li> <li>bravery/strength</li> <li>reconciliation</li> <li>escape</li> <li>respect</li> <li>anti-colonial</li> <li>horror</li> <li>separation</li> <li>heroism</li> <li>foreign invasion</li> <li>independence</li> <li>suffering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>solidarity</li> <li>selflessness</li> <li>simplicity</li> <li>civil war</li> <li>sacrifice</li> <li>historical analogy</li> <li>freedom</li> <li>achievement/ development</li> <li>victory</li> <li>patriotism</li> <li>peace</li> <li>nation</li> <li>nostalgia</li> <li>unity</li> </ul>

MEMORY TOPOI		
<b>autobiographic</b> life stage family histories characteristics profession historical involvement war experience hardships health issues loss familial conflict political conflict social discrimination hunger life ruptures/flight reeducation	<b>national history</b> DRV period Southern history ARVN North-South conflicts earlier dynasties war Thai war Vietnamese-Cambodian War Sino-Vietnamese War First Indochina War Dien Bien Phu VN/American War revolution japanese occupation post-reunification post-Doi Moi French colonial times RV period reunification anniversaries national independence 1945 Doi Moi Armee CPV Chinese occupation/invasions people/historical figure national holidays historical places	<b>cultural history</b> cultural heritage music lullabies proverbs legends poetry VN education traditions village culture cult. holiday Hung King Memorial Day Tet holiday death anniversaries

MEDIA MEMORIES / BIOGRAPHIES	
TV memories computer memories mobile phone memories smartphone memories Internet memories phone memories print memories vinyl memories radio memories VHS memories CD memories speaker memories tape/recorder memories photo memories letter-writing memories music memories	socialist media Chinese media Western programming media events recent news

NORMATIVE VIEWS	
on personal f2f com. on interpersonal med. com on standardized media com. truth/authenticity propaganda aesthetics	on cultural heritage on history education on heroic figures on memory politics

EMOTIONS	
discontent shock anger fear/unsafety loneliness hate happiness	pride (en)courage(ment) grief/sadness love/admiration appreciation obligation

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## **Statutory declaration**

I hereby certify that this dissertation is the result of my own original thought, unless where clearly stated otherwise. All sources used are properly referenced. I certify that none of the work in this dissertation was plagiarized and followed the academic ethics and regulations of the University of Bremen.

Bremen, November 24, 2020

Christina Sanko