Semi-structured interviews within the Pluralistic Memories Project:
A How-to-guide for field researchers

03/03/2015

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Step-by-step summary:

Step 1: Identify potential participants

Step 2: Contact participants to check for availability and eligibility

Step 3: Seek consent to record the interview and store the recording

Step 4: Conduct and record the interview

Step 5: Encrypt the recording and upload it on the project server

Step 6: Complete and encrypt the interview meta-data

Step 7: Transcribe the interview and encrypt the transcription

Step 8: Anonymise the transcription

Step 9: Check the anonymisation with a second reader

Step 10: Return the anonymised transcript to the participant

Step 11: Ask for consent to publish the transcript

Step 12: Translate the transcript

Step 13: Check the translation with the transcriber

Step 14: Transfer final consent, transcriptions and interview meta-data to the central archive

Step 15: Definitively erase all non-anonymised information

Step 16: Store the transcript in a local repertory

Step 17: Finalise the documentation about the fieldwork process

A. Sampling

A1. Who can be interviewed?

Potentially anyone who is living in the conflict-affected area and who is willing to share a personal memory about a conflict-related event that matches the following criteria:

- The event has been eye-witnessed directly by the participant or by a close person who related specific details to him/her
- It is collective, in the sense either that it has directly impacted on many people or that similar events have systematically happened to other people
- It carries details and meanings that go beyond - complement or contrast with - an official or widespread narrative of the conflict
- It is of high relevance to the participant, in the sense that it exemplifies his/her understanding of the conflict.

A2. How to create a diversified sample?

By making all reasonable efforts to interview people who differ with regard to the following characteristics:

- Markers of identity that were politicised during the conflict (e.g., people of different language, religion… according to the context)
- Generations (previous personal memories of political violence vs. first formative event)
- Gender, especially in contexts where ethnographic evidence suggests a gendered "division of labour" with regard to the contents that are being remembered
- Current political involvement (e.g., peace activists, party supporters, non-affiliated…)
- Educational, economic, and social background

A3. How to identify and reach potential participants?

By combining a variety of sampling strategies:

- Expert-based: by direct referral by key informants, defined as persons who have played themselves an active role in the collection of personal stories, or in associations who gather victims or other witnesses
- Event-based: through participation in, for example, specific commemoration events
- Location-based: through longer immersion in chosen associations or local communities
- Advertising: through calls for volunteering disseminated in relevant community media or posted on-site

- Snowballing: relevant people met in the previous sampling process will systematically be asked to refer to other people who might be eligible to participate themselves, or help to come closer to those who can participate.

A4: How to gain participation?

The general rule is: try to convince, don't push! Not pressuring potential participants is an ethical requirement - reluctant people might have good reasons – as well as a pragmatic requirement, since the success of the fieldwork will depend on the reputation of the project and individual researchers in the concerned communities. Prior to the actual interview, researchers should always have a direct conversation with potential participants (face-to-face, phone or skype) to introduce the study and prepare the interview. This conversation should enable fully informed consent of the participants. At the same time, it should be the opportunity to talk informally about the main topics that will be addressed during the interview. This is an essential step, because it will allow both participants and researchers to think about the topics ahead of the interview, and build trust.

During the preparatory conversation, researchers should follow these principles:

- Be interested and try to learn more about your contacts, their life stories, and what matters to them
- Be positive and transparent about the project
- Be consistent and realistic about participation

The following principles of conduct should further facilitate approaching participants while the fieldwork progresses on a particular site:

- Rely on inter-personal networks to build trust (cf. snowball sampling)
- When referred to a new contact, always ask the referring person for consent to reveal his/her identity
- Encourage previous participants to share their experience with their contact

A5: When to stop interviewing people at a given site?

In general, when thematic saturation appears, i.e., when additional interviews do not result in substantially new themes. This principle implies that more people will be interviewed for events with less consensual memories or interpretations.

B. Consent

B1. Why do participants need to provide informed consent twice, before and after the interview?

Informed consent is an ethical requirement for the research and has to be considered and implemented throughout the entire research lifecycle. Gaining consent must take into account any immediate or future uses of data. Interviews will be conducted with the final goal to publish an anonymised transcript. However, participants can only provide informed consent to publish the transcript once they have had a chance to read, and possibly amend, the anonymised version of the full transcript, at the end of the process. During that process, researchers will need to listen to the recording and use the meta-data - which are data about the context of the interview - to carry out and verify the transcription and anonymisation. It is therefore necessary that, before the interview is being recorded, participants are fully informed and explicitly agree with the way their data will be used during this process. Their initial consent will also enable to securely archive the recording, transcript, and metadata - for research purposes only - even in the case where the participants would eventually not be able or willing to provide final consent to publish the transcript (for example, because they cannot be reached again following the interview).

B2. How to request and record consent?

Both initial and final consent need to be audio-recorded. The written document with information about the study (templates provided in Appendices 1 & 2) should be handed out to the participants to enable informed consent (section B3 describes which information need to be included). To record consent, these information should first be orally explained to the participant and all questions posed by him or her answered. Next, after the recording has started, the following "request for consent" should be explained to the participant (in your own words) and explicitly accepted by him/her:

- **For initial consent**: "Have you heard or read the information about the study and have all of your questions been answered satisfactorily? Do you consent voluntarily to participate and agree that your data can be stored and used for scientific purposes by researchers who commit themselves to strictly protect the confidentiality of your data?"
- **For final consent**: "Have you been able to verify the anonymised transcript of your interview? Do you agree that this transcript, or parts of it, , can be made public and read by any interested person?"

The recording of consent should be treated as an integral part of the recorded interview, applying the same procedures of data encryption and storage then for the recorded interview itself. In practice, the initial consent will simply be the start of the audio record of the interview, while the final consent will be recorded later, on a separate audio file.

B3. Which general information about the project needs to be provided before the interview, to enable initial consent?

The following points can be used as a checklist, to make sure all essential pieces of information have been sufficiently discussed with the participant prior to confirming consent and starting the interview:

- The key study features: project name ("Pluralistic Memories Project"), name of the local coordinator and of the interviewer, name of the local host institution, name of the Swiss partner institution (University of Lausanne), link to the project website (www.unil.ch/pmp)

- A short description of the research project: The Pluralistic Memories Project aims to document the diversity of memories about past conflicts, and to help communities to preserve these memories
- What participation implies: To participate in an interview about their memories of conflict-related events, which will last 1 or 2 hours, and to be contacted again to receive a transcript of the interview.
- The fact that participation is voluntary and that participants can withdraw before, during, or shortly after the interview
- The expected outcomes: for example, the benefits for the society, for future generations, that these memories are not forgotten
- How potential risks are being addressed: For example, that the participant will not have to speak about issues that he or she finds uncomfortable, that the data will be treated confidentially etc.
- How the data will be used: the identity of participants or third persons will not be revealed in any publications; the data will be stored in the secure environment of the Swiss Foundation for Research in the Social Sciences and be made available only to scientific researchers who have signed an agreement to protect the confidentiality of participants
- Useful contact information: where participants can reach the interviewer or coordinator, if they have further questions (or wish to withdraw).

There is no fixed sequence for providing the information. In practice, most points might have been addressed already during preliminary contacts with the participants, and a short reminder will be sufficient when meeting them for the actual interview. Otherwise, all listed aspects should be clarified at the latest just before starting the interview.

B4. Which types of data usages will be covered by initial consent?

The following two types of data usages:

- Access to non-anonymised recordings and transcripts. This type of access will be limited to an extremely small number of users, after signing a strict confidentiality agreement: in principle only the qualitative PhD student, communication officer and local PhD supervisor can listen to the audio recordings to create, check or correct the transcripts. Once the transcripts have been completed, anonymised and archived, access to the non-anonymised recording and transcripts can be granted by the head of the data archives to a specially appointed expert only in the exceptional circumstances of justified doubt regarding the integrity or quality of certain transcripts. The appointed expert needs to have proven competence to verify the transcripts and to display perfect scientific integrity and independence.
- Access to the anonymized transcripts and meta-data, i.e, information about the context of an interview and participant (See Section G, on documentation). This type of access will be granted only to academic researchers with a justified scientific interest, after having signed a specific confidentiality agreement.

The project's policy regarding data usage and consent will be published on the project's website and the participants might be directed to them.

Only in the case where a participant explicitly withdraws from the study before his/her transcript has been published will the recording of the interview and all transcripts be erased. In all other cases, initial consent will be sufficient to archive the recordings, transcripts, and meta-data, and to grant access to the anonymised transcripts and metadata to researchers, for scientific purposes only (but, of course not to publish the full transcript or quote extracts from the transcript in a publication).

B5. What still needs to be done prior to seeking final consent to publish the transcript?

During the first interview, participants need to be notified that the anonymized transcript of the interview will be sent to him or her by post. If the participant or/and the interviewer thinks that it might be unsafe to send it by post, an alternative procedure should be defined at that stage. Once the transcript has been anonymized, it will be sent to the participant, together with the final consent information sheet, and an appropriate cover letter. Next, during a second meeting, the interviewer should check whether the participant has read the transcript and/or read it aloud to the participant during the meeting. The participant should be given time for reflection and the opportunity to correct or change any part of the transcript. The interviewer will then ask the respondent whether he/she agrees that the (amended) transcript, or parts of it, can be published. He/she will emphasise that publication of the transcript implies universal public access (any interested person can access the anonymised transcript). In exceptional cases, a third meeting might be arranged when participants are unwilling to provide final consent immediately, for example because they would first like to see the final version of the transcripts after major revisions have been agreed upon during the second meeting. Note that participants' consent is a necessary, but not yet sufficient condition for publication: the publication of a transcript, in complete or partial form, also needs to be approved by the project's steering group.

C. Interviewing

C1. What does it mean that the interviews are "semi-structured"?

It means that they combine a few standardized aspects in order to ensure comparability across interviews – mainly a list of topics to be covered and the order of the three main parts of the interview, according to the **Interview grid** (see Appendix 3) – with flexibility in conducting the interview. Such flexibility enables consideration of the frame of reference of the participant, deepening the reflection, or revealing new aspects of a problem. The following aspects should be flexibly adapted to the course of the interview:

- the order of the topics within the four main parts
- the precise wording of the questions (and possibly the omission of certain questions, when the topic is covered spontaneously by the interviewee)
- the usage of different types of reminders
- the time spent on different topics
- the level of tolerance for digressions

Generally, during a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has two main tasks: to keep the thematic focus of the conversation and to make it easier for the interviewee to share his memories and views related to the topic. The interviewer functions hence as a mediator between the research requirements (e.g, to collect information that is rich and complete on pre-defined topics) and the needs or expectations of the interviewee (e.g., to get his/her story told and heard, to be treated with respect, to so something relevant, to appear in a positive light...)

C2. How to choose an appropriate environment for the interview?

When making an appointment for an interview, it is important to choose an appropriate location with regard to the following requirements:

- The security of participants and interviewers
- The confidentiality of the interview (unauthorised persons cannot hear what is being said)
- The ease of the participant: some people might feel uncomfortable traveling to certain locations for social or cultural reasons
- The quality of the recording (places that are too noisy should be avoided)

To meet these criteria, the following options should be considered for choosing a location:

- Whenever possible, the interview should be conducted in the premises of the research team, and participants should be refunded for their travel expenses

- For participants living far from the premises of the research team, local associations should be approached to ask for a quiet room, to conduct the interview while other professionals are around
- Exceptionally, if there are specific reasons to avoid the previous two types of locations, interviews might be conducted at the participant's home or in another place suggested by the participant.

In the latter case, two researchers have to be present during the interview. They will jointly assess whether the setting does not present particular risks and adapt their conduct accordingly. The second researcher might help to make sure that other people do not interfere with the interview. He/she can also assist the interviewer, by posing follow-up question at the end of a theme, or by observing the interview dynamics and taking field notes.

Whenever it appears that despite of all reasonable efforts the confidentiality of the interview cannot be granted, the researchers should decide to stop the interview and politely explain the reasons to the participant.

C3. How to get the recording right?

A few practical things need to be done when preparing for each interview:

- Check the battery
- Check the free memory
- Avoid noisy places
- Place the recorder not too far from the participant or the interviewer
- Immediately prior to the interview, record and check a test sentence in the same conditions as the interview itself

C4. What to do just before starting the interview?

Prior to the actual interview, interviewers should:

- Introduce themselves, thank the participant for his/her participation, and ideally warm up with an informal but topical conversation
- Allocate an ID to the interview, composed by one letter for the country site and a unique three-digit number for the participant
- Verify that the key aspects have been explained and understood (the goal, content, form, and duration of the interview; the reasons why the interview should be recorded, and the precautions taken to ensure confidentiality… see Section B, on consent)
- Ask the interviewee if he/she still has questions about the course of the interview
- Request permission to start recording
- Turn on the recorder, state the date and place of the interview, as well as the participant's ID
- Formally request consent (see Section B, on consent)

C5. Which attitude to adopt during the interview?

The following style of conduct should be followed:

- Display benevolent neutrality: do not judge the participant for what he/she says (or does not say)
- Be interested, but avoid being intrusive: the participant choses what he/she wishes to share
- Be empathic: make the effort to try to understand the participant in his or her own frame of reference
- Tolerate (apparent) contradictions: allow participants to be ambivalent about certain issues or to hold conflicting memories
- Avoid leading questions: do not suggest that one answer is more desirable than another
- Adjust the pace of the interview to the needs of the participant: there is no need to rush, and participants should feel comfortable to stop and think if needed

C6. How to encourage interviewees to say more about it?

By suggesting words for non-verbal responses and by using different types of probes:

- Reiterate : echo the wording used by the participant to allow him/her to comment and further elaborate on it

  Par: "I never spoke about this event in my family"
  Int: "You never spoke about this event in your family?/."

- Rephrase: repeat the same meaning with different words

  Par: "I never spoke about this event in my family"
  Int: "This is a subject you avoid with our family?/."

- Clarify: suggest a new formulation to summarise or simplify what the participant said

  Par: "Why should we talk about the past? People say we shall remember… But then it just creates more trouble. I don't know… Sometimes I feel like I just want to look forward rather than behind"
  Int: "If I understand well, sometimes you think it might be better to forget what happened?"

- Invert: change the emphasis by stating explicitly what is implied by the participant

  Par: "I often feel like I'm the only one here to care about the past"
  Int: "You think that other people in your community do not want to know about the past?"

- Reorient: selectively probe about one chosen element to keep a wanted direction in the conversation

  Par: "During the war, everyone has to choose where he stands. Sometimes there are no good choices, but when you make the wrong choice, you will have to pay for it. I can tell you exactly who betrayed us in our *community. People know the collaborators and it would be easy to give their names."*

Int: "So during the war, people have to make difficult choices?"

- Inquire: ask a direct question to know more about something previously mentioned

  Int: "You just told me… Could you please say a bit more about it?"
  or
  Int: "Before, you told me…. What do you mean exactly?"
  or
  Int: "You explained… Does it imply that…?"

C7: How to guide the interviewee back to the topic?

When interviewees digress, you might use three progressive strategies:

- Reduce positive feed-back when they drift away
- Follow the thread of the association until the relevant point and restart from it with an appropriate probe (e.g., reorient)
- Explain the fact that you are off topic… (and possibly propose to talk about it after the interview)

C8: How to avoid that interviewees disclose identifying information unnecessarily?

By explaining to the interviewee before and reminding him/her during the interview that he/she should not:

- Name involved persons
- Specify the precise location, but only the region or part of the country
- Specify the date, but only the period of the conflict

C9: How to conclude the interview?

Once the interviewer has ensured that the relevant issues to be covered were discussed, he/she should:

- Turn off the recorder
- If necessary, return to the issues related to data privacy (reassuring)
- Explain that there will be a second interview
- Arrange the procedure for sending the anonymised transcript with the participant
- Ask for feedback on the course of the interview, remain interested and ready to enter into dialogue
- Thank the participant

C10: What to do shortly after the interview?

To avoid losing data, as soon as interviewers are back to office, they should:

- Transfer the audio recording to the computer, encrypt and backup the file, and securely delete the (unencrypted) audio recording on the computer and the recorder (see Data security guidelines)
- Mentally retrace the different moments of the interview and take field-notes regarding any observations that might be useful for the interpretation of the interview (e.g., context and atmosphere of the interview, non-verbal behaviour of the interviewee, etc., see Section G on Documentation)

D. Transcription

D1. Who shall transcribe the interview?

Transcription shall be carried out by the researcher who has conducted the interview. He/she will need to sign a transcriber confidentiality agreement.

D2. What information should be transcribed?

The transcript should not be a literal transcription of the oral speech; it should rather have the content and format of a written text that can be understood by an external reader:

- In general, the text should be tidied up, with corrected spelling, but expressions used by participants should be kept. However, dialects, idiosyncratic expressions, back-channel cues (e.g., “mh” "uh-huh"), or other typical oral speech habits, should not be transcribed as such, but possibly be changed into a more standard form of written language.

- Significant non-verbal or ambiguous verbal expressions (including other unusual things, such as a long break in the middle of the sentence; laugher, noises like 'hum', jokes, another person coming into the room) should be indicated in the transcript.

- Words or passages that can’t be understood should be identified with an indication of the length of the concerned unit (e.g., [unintelligible word] or [1:30 minutes unintelligible])

Note that depending on the qualitative PhD project, there could be a second transcription: in addition to a standard written form, the PhD student might transcribe extracts in a more detailed/literal way, for example for the purpose of more fine-grained discursive analysis.

D3. How to format the layout of the transcript?

The layout should be consistent throughout the transcripts. Transcripts should:
- Have a unique identifier, a name or a number
- Have a document header or cover sheet with interview or event details such as reference number, pseudonym, date, place, interviewer name and interviewee details.
- Have speaker tags to indicate the question/answer sequence or turn-taking in a conversation
- Have line breaks between turns
- Have numbered lines throughout the transcript to facilitate reviewing
- Be page numbered

To smooth out the workflow, passages likely to require anonymisation should be flagged in a consistent way, immediately during the transcription, for example by using always the same colour highlight for every word to be replaced in the anonymised version. A transcript example can be found in Appendix 3.

E. Anonymisation

E1. What needs to be anonymised?

Anonymisation, most simply, is rendering research participants or third persons mentioned in an interview anonymous by removing identifying information from the transcript. A person's identity can be disclosed from:

- Direct identifiers such as names, addresses, postcode information, telephone numbers, ID numbers or pictures.
- Indirect identifiers which, when linked with other publicly available information sources, could identify someone, e.g. detailed geography, organizations to which the participant belongs, educational institutions from which the participant graduated (and year of graduation), exact occupations held, places where the participant grew up, exact dates of events, exceptional values or characteristics (like age or salary).

Direct identifiers are often collected as part of the research administration process but are usually not essential research information and can therefore easily be removed from the data.

Rare combinations of indirect identifiers may also lead to identification. Indirect identifiers may be differentiated into 'extremely identifying' (regional variables, residence, work), very identifying (sex, nationality), and identifying (age, occupation, education). For instance, a postcode may not be troublesome on its own, but when combined with other attributes, like income, a postcode may identify unique individuals.

Generally, anonymisation is about finding the right balance between guaranteeing anonymity and maintaining the usefulness of the data. The objective should be to achieve a reasonable level of anonymisation, avoiding overly harsh editing, while maintaining maximum content. However, in the Pluralistic memoires project, due to the very sensitive nature of the data, and the potential risks encountered by research participants should their identity be revealed, a high level of anonymisation needs to be achieved. This is the more so important as the data collected will be made openly available, as part of an archive.

E2. How to flag anonymised text?

It is necessary to indicate where anonymisation has occurred, in a first step to facilitate checking and proofing the process of anonymisation itself. An easy way to do that is to keep all revisions introduced during the anonymisation process in the form of track-changes in a word processor.

Furthermore, the new text should be inserted into brackets […]. This will allow keeping a discrete flag in the anonymised transcript (once the track-changes have been accepted, see below) to inform secondary readers of the anonymisation.

It is also a good idea to flag any named person or place even if you decide not to anonymize them. This will facilitate the review process, and help you discuss cases for which you may not be certain. It can be done by inserting a ‘comment’ in the word processor, attached to the passage under consideration.

The final transcript with all track-changes and comments appearing as word revisions will constitute the **anonymisation log**. It can be transformed into the **anonymised transcript** simply by accepting all track changes and deleting all comments.

E3. How to anomymise names of people?

- If the person is referred to more than once in the transcript, use a pseudonym. The usual procedure is to replace the first name with a pseudonym and to remove the surnames. If a person is referred to by his/her surname only, the pseudonym is also a surname.
- If the person is only referred to once, you may describe him/her according to the person’s significance within the context of the transcript: “[female/male friend]”; “[father]”; “[teacher]”.
- If reference is made to persons who are publicly known on account of their activities in politics, business life, or other work-related spheres, their names should not be changed for pseudonyms. A pseudonym or categorization (i.e., local politician) should be used if the person’s private affairs are talked about.

E4. How to anomymise names of places?

The kind of place names that should be anonymised will depend on context and may include: countries, cities, towns, villages, rural areas, schools and universities, places of work. It usually depends on the size of the place (there are less chances to identify someone in a large city than a small town), and the attachment of the participant to the place (i.e., visitor or long term resident).

- For geographical locations, if anonymisation is needed, include where possible and appropriate information about the broad regional area.
- If there is mention of more than one place in the same region, use numbered place identifiers (“I was brought-up in [South-Western town 1]”)
- In some circumstances it may be necessary to add additional information that indicates other significant aspects of the place in question. For example: “I went to Hope Africa University” becomes “I went to a private university in Bujumbura”.

- In some cases it may not be necessary to anonymise places. For example, you may decide that in the case of universities it may be necessary only to anonymize the dates of attendance. Thus, "I went to the University of Colombo in 1973" becomes "I went to University of Colombo [in the early seventies]. However, this decision must be taken in the context of other information provided within the transcript.

E5. How to anonymise names of organisations?

It may be necessary to anonymise these depending on context. The key question to consider is whether or not the organization is unique enough for individuals to be identified through their association with it.

If you do anonymise the name of an organization, do so by referring to its broad category e.g., [church choir] or [local football club]. Provide sufficient information in your description to reflect the significance of the organization in the context of the whole transcript.

E6. How to anonymize names of occupations?

In some instances occupational data alone will not identify people. For example, many people worked as fishermen in Sri Lanka. Where an occupational title is likely to identify individuals, replace with a more general description. For example: "I was the third secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs" becomes "I was [a senior civil servant]".

Similarly, employers' names can be replaced by a more general category. Thus, "I worked as a waitress in Lac Tanganyika Restaurant" becomes "I worked as a waitress in [a restaurant in Bujumbura]"

E7. Which other potentially identifying information might need to be anonymised?

In some contexts, information about nationality or ethnicity may easily reveal identity, e.g.. "the Jordanians who took over the shop." This can be changed easily to "the [people] who took over the shop".

Other information that may identify individuals under certain circumstances include names of countries, subjects studied at school or college, model of car driven, a diagnosed severe illness, and so on. As a general rule, judgment must be exercised about whether or not any particular item in the transcript must be altered in order to preserve confidentiality and privacy. If you are unsure, comment on the item using track changes and discuss it with the second reviewer.

E8. How to treat highly sensitive information?

Under some circumstances it may be necessary to excise entire sections from transcripts, or to withhold individual transcripts from within a project, for example where sensitive text might expose participants or third persons to legal action, or place them at risk of harm. Such decisions should never be taken by one researcher alone, but always be carefully considered with the local research coordinator and possibly checked with the central coordinating team.

E9. How to check the anonymity of transcripts with a second reader?

There should always be a second reader (second researcher or PhD supervisor) who will check the anonymity of the transcripts. For the first few interviews, the PhD supervisor should check the anonymity of the transcripts by comparing them to the original ones following the anonymisation log, and reading them entirely. This should then be followed by a debriefing. It will later be sufficient to check only the anonymized transcripts in addition to discussing any cases of uncertainty spotted by the transcribing researcher.

E10. How to check the anonymity of the transcripts with the interviewee?

The anonymized transcript is sent to the participant before the second interview, together with a cover letter which explains that they need to check and mark potentially identifying information. During the second interview, the interviewer needs to check whether the participant has indeed read the transcript, discuss potential points of concern raised by the participant, and allow him/her to make final revisions in the text.

In particular cases, participants might wish to complement the interview during the second meeting. In such cases, the interviewer can decided to record a complementary interview, and add it to the final transcription, provided it adds new elements to the thematic framework delimited by the interview grid. A third meeting will be necessary then to verify the anonymisation of the new parts in the transcript, unless the additions are minor, raise no new confidentially issue, and the participant has explicitly given his/her consent to publish the additions, in a statement recorded during the second meeting (as part of the procedure outlined in B2 and B5)

F. Translation

F1. Who should translate final transcripts?

A local professional translator should carry out the English translations. Ideally, this should be a bilingual person or a native speaker of the local language with professional experience in English translation. His or her knowledge might be tested, for example with the translation of the test interviews. Field notes that are part of the individual interview meta-data should be translated by the researcher (he or she needs to fill in in English the standardized form for meta-data)

F2. How should translators document inter-linguistic ambiguities and multiple options?

They should be marked or highlighted in the text. For words that are hard to translate, an annotation (for example, a footnote) should be inserted that describes the local meaning.

F3. How to check and finalise the translations?

Normally, each translation should be checked by the person who did the interview and the transcription. After he or she checks the translation and inserts comments (e.g., "here I do not agree"), the final decision should be made in a debriefing session with the PhD supervisor. During this session, any disagreements, ambiguities, or multiple options should be discussed and decided by the local team, who might also leave a comment in the text to explain alternative options. The researchers might further insert comments if there are contextually loaded meanings that would not be noticed by an external reader.

G. Documentation

G1. Which interview meta-data need to be recorded to document the context of individual interviews and fieldwork?

Recorded meta-data should include information on:

- The socio-demographic background of the participant (gender, age, geographic region, marital status, estimate of socio-economic status, ethnicity, education level, etc.)
- The interview setting and atmosphere (location of the interview, who was present during the interview, difficulties during the interview such as interruptions or difficulties in following the interview grid, etc.)
- The recruitment process (how was the participant selected and approached, after how many contacts did he or she accept to participate in the study, etc.)
- The participant's consent (which consents did the participant accept, were there difficulties in obtaining a consent, etc.)

G2. How to check the accuracy and completeness of meta-data?

Meta-data should be checked first for accuracy by the local PhD supervisor. They should be recorded as soon as possible after the interview and sent to the central scientific coordinator for further checking of form and completeness.

G3. How to document study-level processes?

Besides the interview-level meta-data, the research process should be documented as well as possible, in order to make clear who did what, when, and how. This will be useful information later for the central coordinator, for secondary users of the data, but even for the research teams themselves, who may forget some of the details of the study. The aim should be to have a study-level report that provides all needed documentation to guide and inform users and other stakeholders about the project and the accompanying data.

Documentation means describing in sufficient detail, in a text file, the following aspects of the research process:

- What were the research questions and which methodologies were used to address the research questions?
- Sampling: describe the sample – number of interviews and key characteristics of participants. How were participants selected, according to which rules, and by whom? How were sampled participants contacted and recruited?
- Consent: how was consent acquired, what were the challenges, and what were the reasons for not providing consent in some cases? How were the consents recorded? How was the second consent obtained? What were the challenges?
- Interviewing: how were the interviews conducted and by whom? In general, where did they take place? On average, how long did they last? How were the recordings handled?
- Transcription: who conducted the transcriptions and what rules were followed?
- Anonymisation: what rules and processes were followed in anonymising the data? Who was responsible for the anonymisation and checking?
- Translation: who did the translations? What were their qualifications? What rules were followed and what problems were encountered? How were the translations checked?
- How were the data handled during the research process? How were they kept secure and encrypted? What steps were taken to ensure the protection of individuals and the confidentiality of the data?
- How were the data analysed? What techniques were used?

The documentation should be done in English, as the project progresses, collectively by the country research teams, although different team members could have different documentation responsibilities. In some cases, portions of generic documentation might be supplied by the central scientific coordinator. It should be avoided that the documentation is completed only late in the project.

H. Data handling and security

H1. How to prevent leaks of sensitive data?

Interviews should either be recorded with a device that allows for encryption in real time, or otherwise be transferred on the spot to a laptop computer, encrypted (for oneself and an additional local researcher to prevent permanent loss of the data in the case of key loss) and erased on the audio-recorder before leaving the place of the interview. You should never keep audio-recordings of the past interviews on the audio-recorder, after they have been transferred to the computer.

On the computers, for all non-anonymized files, a two-level security procedure has to be applied: working with encrypted hard drives and encrypted documents. More precisely:

- All researchers who will work with audio-recordings and non-anonymized transcripts will work on a computer with an encrypted hard drive
- All non-anonymized files should be stored on the computer only in an encrypted format
- The non-anonymized files should be decrypted only while the person is working with them. As soon as the person has finished working with the file (at the end of a working day), he or she needs to encrypt it and securely erase the original file
- Non-anonymized files should never be sent to another person (for example, PhD supervisors) in a non-secure way (for example, by email without encryption or from a non-unil address)
- As soon as non-anonymised files have been stored in Switzerland and the researcher has finished working with them, they need to be securely deleted (i.e., erased) from all places at which they have been stored

Interviewers should never carry their computer with them on an interview appointment when there is a non-negligible risk that the computer is damaged, confiscated, or stolen. The computers, which contain non-anonymized data (even if only in an encrypted format), must be kept in the safe environment (e.g. your office, a safe in a hotel room).

H2. How to prevent data losses?

- All files need to be regularly backed-up. The best is to store it on their private space on the project's server. If the Internet connection does not allow it, they need to store it on an external encrypted hard disk.
- Initial encryption should be done for two persons: oneself and one additional local researcher (in the case the researcher loses his/her key).

H3. How to transmit files to the central data repository?

- Immediately after each interview, the audio recording needs to be encrypted for the central scientific coordinator and transferred to Lausanne. Ideally, it should be uploaded on the project's server, and if this is not possible it should be encrypted, written on CDROM and mailed by post. It needs to be followed by a textual document, which includes information about the precise length of the interview.
- Non-anonymized transcripts, anonymization logs, and meta-data documents need to be encrypted for the scientific coordinator and uploaded to the project's server as soon as these files are ready.
- Anonymized and translated transcripts need to be uploaded to the project's server as soon as they are ready.
- After having verified and inventoried the audio recording, non-anonymized transcript, and anonymization log, the scientific coordinator will permanently encrypt them for the head of the archives and the principal investigator only.
- After having verified and inventoried the audio recording, non-anonymized transcript, and anonymization log, the scientific coordinator will permanently

encrypt them for the head of the archives, the principal investigator, and herself. She will regularly update the inventory file that will be kept encrypted on the project's server until the end of the fieldwork, after which it will be stored at FORS.

Prepared by Guy Elcheroth, Alexandra Stam, Brian Kleiner and Sandra Penic
Lausanne, 17/10/2014, updated on 3/3/2015

Appendix 1

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TEMPLATE FOR PROVIDING INFORMATION THAT SHOULD ENABLE INFORMED INITIAL CONSENT

Information and Purpose

The interview, for which you are being asked to participate in, is a part of the **Pluralistic Memories Project**. In [*country*], the project is hosted at the [*name of the local institution*] and is coordinated by [*name of the local coordinator*]. The Pluralistic Memories Project is an international study, hosted at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. More information about the project can be found at www.unil.ch/pmp

The Pluralistic Memories Project studies memories and opinions of people about past conflicts. It aims to document the diversity of memories about past conflicts, and to examine why and how some war narratives become official or collectively forgotten. It also aims to support local researchers who study collective memories in conflict-torn societies.

Your Participation

Your participation in this study will consist of an interview lasting approximately one to two hours. You will be asked questions about your memory of events related to the conflict and your opinion about the conflict. You are not required to answer the questions. You may skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

After the interview, the researchers will send you a transcript of your interview and ask you to participate in a second much shorter interview during which the transcript will be discussed.

The benefit of your participation is to keep the memories of conflict alive, so that other people in your country, future generations, but also people living elsewhere, can learn lessons from it that might prevent future occurrence of such events. [*Culturally sensitive, formulated by local researchers*]

Withdrawal from the Study

The participation in this study is voluntary. At any time during the interview you may notify the researcher that you would like to stop the interview and your participation in the study. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation. You can also withdraw from the study after the interview by contacting the research team. In that case, your interview will be permanently destroyed.

Confidentiality and Data Sharing

The interview will be audio recorded; however, your name or other identifying information will not be revealed in any publications. Your interview will be stored in a secure environment of the Swiss Foundation for Research in the Social Sciences for long-term preservation. Data may be made available to accredited researchers only after they sign a legal agreement to use the data in a way that respects your confidentiality.

Contact

Specify contact information of the local research team ([*name of the local researchers*] at [*phone number, postal address, email address*])

Appendix 2

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TEMPLATE FOR COVER LETTER TO BE SENT WITH THE ANONYMIZED TRANSCRIPT

You have participated in an interview for the Pluralistic Memories Project (www.unil.ch/pmp). In [*country*], the project is hosted at the [*name of the local institution*] and is coordinated by [*name of the local coordinator*].

As agreed, we are sending you a transcript of your interview. In the transcript, we have removed all the information that can potentially identify you. Please, read the transcript carefully and check whether there is any other remaining information that should be removed.

During our next meeting, we will discuss together the content of this transcript. After all your requests have been met and you approve the content of the transcript, we will ask for you permission to publish it.

Contact

Specify contact information of the local research team ([*name of the local researchers*] at [*phone number, postal address, email address*])

Appendix 3:

INTERVIEW GRID

Introduction

When describing to the participants the goal of the interview, explain in your own words:
In this project, we are interested in personal memories of people in this area about places and events that they see as important. Your own memories may or may not be the same as the memories of many other people. I will ask you first about your personal memories related to a particular place that is important for you. Next, I will ask you about your memories of events that are important to understand your view of the conflict that has affected this area for a long time. These should not be events about which you have learned only through the media. Rather, they should be events that have happened during your lifetime to yourself or to someone whom you know well and who told you about them.

PART I. Meaning of home

The goal is to learn which place represents home for the interviewee and why.

<table>
<tr><th>Topics</th><th>Examples of Main Questions</th><th>Additional /Clarifying Questions</th></tr>
<tr><td>- Defining (locating) home

Residential trajectory: from the place of origin to the current living place, Displacement

- Meaning and importance of home

Attachment to home-place: does it define who the interviewee is today (and how); who is part of home and why?</td><td>First ask:
Where are your from? Have you been living here all your life?

Then ask:
Out of all of these places, which is the most important for you and why?
Could you imagine living in another place?

** If a person is a refugee, don't forget to ask about the place where his/her parents lived</td><td>Defining (locating) home
Are you currently living at this place? Have you been living there during your lifetime?

Does this place describe a village, a neighbourhood, or a larger area?

Importance of home
If you or your family have been living at different places, why is this particular place more important than others for yourself?

What role does this place play in your daily life today? How easy or difficult is for you to go or stay there?

What does it mean to you to be in touch with other people coming from or living currently at this place?

How does this place currently look like and who lives there?

Has home-place changed through time and why?</td></tr>
</table>

PART II. Conflict events

The goal is to learn about conflict related events that happened during his/her lifetime and are of high importance to the interviewee. These should be events witnessed by the interviewee or someone he/she knows well. The interviewee should be encouraged to think about both positive and negative events.

Topics	Examples of Main Questions	Additional /Clarifying Questions
- Conflict events Conflict events related to inter-group context: positive or negative experiences with 'others' Conflict events related to intra-group context: positive or negative experiences with in-group members or of everyday living Detailed description of one event (selected by the interviewee) **- Meaning of these events for the interviewee** Reasons for describing these particular events. Explanation of how have these events affected interviewee's life, his/her home, how are they related to his/her understanding of the conflict.	Could you tell me about one event related to conflict*, that is very important to you/that you remember very well? Do you think that this is a very exceptional event, or is it in some way typical of the conflict? Do you know about other, similar events? or: What would you see as a more typical event? Can you give me an example? ** In Palestine, ask about 'situation' instead of conflict*	Did that happen during your lifetime?/When did that happen? Were you directly involved in this event or do you know someone who was? Why do you mention this event? Who was exposed to the event?/Who was present when that happened? Was there violence involved? Who was the target of violence and why? Did some people help others during the event? Did everyone behave in the same way? What can we learn from such an event? Can you tell me anything else?

PART III. Public and private memories

The goal is to learn about the interviewee's perception of public memories of conflict and how he/she contrasts them to his/her private memories. Do his/her memories complement or contradict the official public narratives and why? Is it difficult to share this type of memories in public and why?

Topics	Examples of Main	Additional /Clarifying Questions

	Questions	
- Public recognition of the described events Interviewee's impression of the degree to which described events are publicly memorized and reasons for it; His/her perception of who speaks about these types of events and who doesn't (and why); His/her understanding of potential consequences of public sharing of such memories **- Bias and fairness in national (and international) media coverage of conflict, and the politicians' narrative about conflict**	Have similar events been covered by the media? How? Do you think that these events are sufficiently and fairly covered by the media? Why?	Have you frequently seen, heard, or read reports on similar events in the media? How many people in this country do you think know about this kind of event? Do you think that more people should know about this kind of event? Is it hard to talk about this kind of event? Why? Who are the people who tell similar things and who are the people who say different things? What might be the consequences of sharing such stories publicly? Who would benefit if the event was better known?

Appendix 4: TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE

Study Name: Pluralistic Memories Project COUNTRY
Interview number:
Date of the interview (month & year):
Gender:
Age (age range):
Region:

[ ] indicates that the text has been anonymised **( )** describes respondent's non-verbal reactions **(( ))** specifies clarification by researcher or translator **Footnotes** describe inter-linguistic ambiguities noted by researcher or translator Words in **Italics** are words in the local language.

Present at the interview: I 1 = Interviewer 1 I 2 = Interviewer 2 R = Respondent ***Also present:*** Respondent's child

EXAMPLE

I 1: Could you shortly describe a few conflict-related-events witnessed by yourself or someone you know well that are good example of your own understanding of the conflict?

R: Personally witnessed (hesitates)? Well, we went to Krajina during the Storm. I was in [a village] near Drnis. I was there on [in summer] of 1995, when the Croatian army took over the territory. I was coming by the train Zagreb-Split, and I could see that the whole area was burning and I could see a convoy of people leaving, old people, children, women. Imagine, they told to them to stay, that nothing will happen to them.
Tudjman ((Croatian president at that time)) and the army were distributing pamphlets days before in the whole area, saying to people that they can stay, that they will be protected…Yeah right…A few years ago it was published, I think in Feral ((Croatian independent newspapers)), a full transcript of the meeting on which the Storm was planned by Tudjman ((Croatian president at that time)) and the military top. He said, I quote, we will so call guarantee them safety[1]

[1] In Croatian ("Mi cemo im kao garantirati da ce biti sigurni") it implies that they will purposely give false guarantees.