

**Cambodia, from then to now:
memory and plural identities in the aftermath of genocide
May 5th, 6th and 7th, 2011
www.curakhmer.org**

Astrid NORÉN-NILSSON

“The (im)possibility of Cambodian nationalism - views from former Khmer Rouge communities”

Whether the Khmer Rouge-movement was primarily Cambodian, Communist, or foreign in nature remains a focal point of scholarly debate on the nature of the revolution. But what are the ideas today among former members of the movement that can be identified as visions of the political content of the Cambodian nation, and the most pressing issues and perils she faces at present? Can knowledge of such discussions in any way contribute towards our understanding of the first debate? Starting out as a series of conversations about the meaning of Cambodian patriotism today, and contemporary visions of the nation more broadly conceptualised, this research project naturally came to involve the memory of former Khmer Rouge members as their negotiation of the present entails a renegotiation of the past. This paper builds on interviews with former members of the Khmer Rouge movement primarily in the communities of Pailin, Malay, and Anlong Veng/Trapeang Prasat during a series of visits and sojourns during 2009-2010. It does not claim to produce a 'total' interpretation of the intellectual discourses of the former movement; rather, by tracing out individual life trajectories, it wants to pick up on easily overlooked nuances building on subjective accounts and perceptions. By engaging with today's plural identities, it suggests important differences as to the present stance and memory re-creation of this diverse community as the two come to blur.