

**CONFLICTED WALLS, MIXED MESSAGES:  
UNTANGLING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND TRAUMATIC MEMORIES  
AT THE SREBRENICA-POTOČARI MEMORIAL IN BOSNIA**

by

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and approved by

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## Abstract of the Dissertation

### Conflicted Walls, Mixed Messages: Untangling Transitional Justice and Traumatic Memories at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial in Bosnia

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Dr. Alexander Laban Hinton

Why is it that, twenty-three years after the Srebrenica genocide, transitional justice and memorialization promises to “heal” and provide “closure” remain largely unrealized—despite assertions by practitioners, scholars, and diplomats to the contrary? The notion that justice is synonymous with healing and closure is just one of the underlying foundations of the transitional justice paradigm expressed at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial (Memorial) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia).

International and local actors have different conceptions and expectations of memorialization initiatives focused on broad outcomes and grassroots processes. There is a gap between where transitional justice’s conceptions of memorials as symbolic reparations *end* and where memory battles *begin*. The conversation tends to jump straight from enacting justice into discussions about truth-telling, non-repetition, reconciliation, and repair.

How these sites’ stakeholders negotiate politics and emotions directly impacts what the memorials communicate. This is especially true when they are governed by survivors living in post-conflict societies where justice remains fleeting, painful memories abound, and international interest has shifted elsewhere. Less attention is also paid to the intricate

ways that stakeholders remember, erase, abandon, and manipulate memories. This dichotomy typifies studies about the Memorial. With a handful of exceptions, most fall within two camps. The first emphasize the role of survivors in lobbying for the site's location that are connected to post-war refugee return and rebuilding the community. The second focus on how the annual commemoration magnifies ethnic hostilities.

I argue that segregating discussions about transitional justice's efficacy and the ongoing memory wars direct attention away from the problematic mnemonic practices they foster at the Memorial. Questions about the genocide as well as how victimhood, perpetration, complicity, nationalism, religion, and gender are reflected speak to the complicated production and representation of memories that the paradigm tends to eschew. Isolating conflicts about how fraught justice and traumatic memories play out across the memorial's walls and property reveal why it remains a site of both reparation and contestation decades later.

**Keywords:** *Srebrenica, Bosnia, genocide, transitional justice, memorialization, memorials, symbolic reparations, commemoration, exhibitions, cemeteries, atrocity sites, collective memory, mnemonic battles, prosthetic memories, postmemory, narratives, burials, knowledge production, critical thinking*



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during my most exasperating moments. Her scholarship within the field of memory studies as well as her invitation to participate in a related faculty seminar served as one of this study's intellectual pillars. Dr. Stephen Bronner of Rutgers University's Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights (CGHR) and DGA challenged me to consider this dissertation's connections to political science as well as reflect upon the unfinished nature of justice. I first met Dr. Sarah Wagner of George Washington University in 2010 while in a crowded field during one of Srebrenica's commemorative events. Years later, her nuanced research about the site continues to inspire and inform my work. She provided vital page by page comments to inspire a more sophisticated analysis.

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From the moment Muhamed introduced us back in 2011, Anesa Begić became a trusted confidante. She as well as the entire Begić family generously offered me extended lodging there as well as in Sarajevo. I lived with them for many months at a clip over the years and they always took incredible care of me no matter what was happening in their lives or what holiday it was. From helping me seek out medical care to providing me with constant encouragement when I became disillusioned, I will forever be beholden to them. My second Bosnian home was in Teočak, where the Mujagić family welcomed me during breaks. It was through my close friendships with the siblings Jogi and Elma that I learned about different facets of the war and village politics based on their family's experiences.

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Anyone who works “on Bosnia” for any significant period soon discovers other equally dedicated souls. I first met Tanya Domi at a Western Balkans event she hosted at Columbia University’s Harriman Institute. Over the years, she has become a dear friend with whom I frequently discuss Bosnian current affairs as well as float some of my more polarizing research ideas. Tanya has also been extremely liberal in sharing her contacts which helped me hit the ground running in 2016.

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## **Dedication**

*For Sophie, Micah, and Emma*

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## List of Acronyms

ABiH	Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina ( <i>Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovina</i> )
Bosnia	Bosnia and Herzegovina ( <i>Bosnia i Hercegovina</i> )
Bošniak	Bosnian Muslim
Bosnian	Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language
Canbat	Canadian United Nations Peacekeeping Battalion (part of UNPROFOR)
CNA	Center for Nonviolent Action
DPA	Dayton Peace Agreement
Dutchbat	Dutch United Nations Peacekeeping Battalion (part of UNPROFOR)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina ( <i>Federacija Bosna i Hercegovina</i> )
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HLC	Humanitarian Law Center
HVO	Croatian Defense Council ( <i>Hrvatska Vijeće Odbrane</i> )
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICMP	International Commission on Missing Persons
ICTJ	International Center for Transitional Justice
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army ( <i>Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija</i> )
BAM	Bosnian Convertible Marka
MPI	Missing Persons Institute
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RS	Republika Srpska
SDA	Party for Democratic Action ( <i>Stranka Demokratske Akcije</i> )
SDS	Serb Democratic Party ( <i>Srpska Demokratska Stranka</i> )
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
SRBiH	Socialist Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina
SRFY	Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SNSD	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats ( <i>Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata</i> )
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UN Women	United Nations Women
US	United States
VRS	Bosnian Serb Army ( <i>Vojska Republike Srpske</i> )
WCC	War Crimes Chamber in the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina
WWI/WWII	World War One/World War Two

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction—Untangling Transitional Justice and Memory**

What are you doing for Srebrenica?

—Hatidža Mehmedović  
Mothers of Srebrenica, 2012  
(1952 - July 22, 2018)

“When do we stop being a post-conflict country?”

Hasan Nuhanović asks me. He goes on to explain how tired he is of having to talk about genocide and transitional justice constantly. He looks different each time: somedays less gaunt than others, somedays less stressed than others, somedays less hopeless than others. Since July 1995, Hasan has worked tirelessly for justice as one of Srebrenica’s most internationally visible survivors. During the 1992-1995 Bosnian War, Hasan, along with his father, worked as translators for the United Nations Protection Force’s (UNPROFOR) Dutch battalion (Dutchbat). The peacekeeping compound occupied what was a former Yugoslav-era battery factory (Battery Factory) located in the manufacturing town of Potočari about five kilometers away from Srebrenica. He would later win a high-profile case against the Dutch government that held it responsible for the deaths of his family who were ejected from the base by Dutchbat on July 11, 1995—the day the genocide began.<sup>1</sup>

Hasan has published two books: one is a treatise about the international community’s failure to protect Srebrenica, while the other is a novel about his wartime experience in the besieged enclave.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the women who lead the four different groups of women’s associations collectively known as the Mothers of Srebrenica, it is arguably Hasan’s face

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the Supreme Court of the Netherlands ruled that the Dutch government bore responsibility for the deaths of Nuhanović’s brother and father, as well as a third man, Rizo Mustafić, because it was clear their lives were put in danger when they were evicted. His mother’s death, however, was not included in the case although she was ordered to leave at the same time (Supreme Court of the Netherlands 2013). Nuhanović buried his father at the Memorial Center in July 2011; his mother and brother are also buried there. In 2014, the Dutch government was found responsible for the deaths of 300 people during the 1995 genocide by a civil court in The Hague. However, the court still held that the government and its peacekeepers were not liable for the thousands who were murdered (Associated Press 2014). In 2016, the European Court of Human Rights dismissed Nuhanović and Mustafić’s wife’s case to hold the Dutch peacekeepers responsible (European Court of Human Rights 2016).

<sup>2</sup> The books are *Under the UN Flag: The International Community and the Srebrenica Genocide* (2007) and *Zbijeg: Put u Srebrenicu (Escape: The Road to Srebrenica)* (2014; Bosnian only).

that is most familiar on the international scene in relation to the genocide.<sup>3</sup> Countless articles have been written about and innumerable interviews conducted with him over the past twenty-three years. Keeping track of his schedule is intense given the sheer volume of events to which he is invited as a special guest. It is almost always about Srebrenica for him, nearly every moment of every day.

Over time, Hasan has also become the de facto spokesperson and liaison for the Srebrenica Memorial.<sup>4</sup> If you have questions about the most recent installation created in partnership with Dutch stakeholders, you talk to Hasan. If you want to know more about the long-term renovation plans for the site, you talk to Hasan. If you want to know anything in particular about the Memorial—which usually involves the same set of questions he has already responded to hundreds of time—you talk to Hasan. That is the party line: all roads lead back to Hasan. Whether he has the answers as well as the time and/or desire to speak with you, is an entirely different matter.

I first met Hasan back in 2011. He gave our research group a detailed presentation about how the genocide unfolded, including a step by step description of what happened on the Memorial's property when Srebrenica fell. We met in a stuffy ground floor conference room with faded pictures of Srebrenica's refugees lining the walls. It had been somewhat shabbily renovated and was tucked inside a two floor building, large portions

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<sup>3</sup> The three dominant groups of associations of women I was continually redirected to are: 1) The "Mothers of the Enclaves Srebrenica and Žepa" led by Munira Subašić (based in Sarajevo, with a new field office in Bratunac); the "Women of Srebrenica" led by Hajra Ćatić and Nura Begović (based in Tuzla); and the "Mothers of Srebrenica" led by Hatidža Mehmedović (based in Srebrenica). There is a fourth group, the "Association of the Women of the Podrinje-Bratunac" led by Šuhra Sinanović, as well. Throughout this study, I will refer to them collectively as the "Mothers" or by their individual names when referring to a single organization.

<sup>4</sup> Hasan has been involved with the site since its early days. In 2012, he was officially hired as a strategic consultant tasked with overseeing renovations and installations in the Battery Factory.



of which appeared abandoned and destroyed. In fact, the entire property looked disconnected from everything that had been discussed.

Until Hasan casually dropped a bomb.

He said it was from the corner of this same building where he said goodbye to his father, Ibro, mother, Nasiha, and brother, Muhamed. Hasan's dilemma on July 11 was whether to leave the property intact as a family unit or to stay behind and find them later. He chose the latter. From right here he watched them slowly and tearfully make their way towards the highway to meet their grim fate. He also pointed out the hole in a rusty fence on one of the property's borders where refugees would slip into the base unnoticed. This fence is roughly in the same vicinity as was Dutchbat's former communications center. Nowhere is any of this mentioned to visitors, compounded by the fact that the site's scale is overwhelming to take in (Figure 1.1).

There is a good reason to feel that way. The *Memorijalni Centar Srebrenica-Potočari Spomen Obilježje i Mezarje za Žrtve Genocida iz 1995 Godine* (Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide; Srebrenica Memorial/Memorial) is located on a sprawling property divided into two distinct parts—the Battery Factory and the cemetery—that are separated by the main road connecting Srebrenica, Potočari, and Bratunac (Figure 1.2). The Battery Factory complex is approximately eleven acres, or a little over the size of eight American football fields.<sup>5</sup> Only a small cement block bearing two black letters “UN,” now enclosed in protective glass, indicates that this is the former peacekeeping compound (Figure 1.3). Aside from

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<sup>5</sup> The tract of empty land in front of the Battery Factory complex is almost the size of the cemetery, the latter of which is 44,000 square meters.

the largely overlooked “July 11” photographic exposition inside the cemetery, the three exhibitions about the genocide are housed inside different parts of the Battery Factory.

Each time Hasan tours the site with guests, he intermixes his memories about the war and the compound with chatter about his life now. In his eyes, as well as so many other survivors I have met, this is not simply a monument to the genocide: it is the living embodiment of justice that has not been fully delivered. It is a symbol of the discrimination they continue to experience as a minority population living inside a territory governed by the genocide’s perpetrators. When they look at this site they are also reminded about the victims who remain missing as well as the ferocity of genocide denial that continues to spread. Adding insult to injury, they have to negotiate with the Dutch who have their own vested interest in shaping the site’s narrative. It is no wonder that the survivors who run it are fiercely protective of how the genocide’s memory—their memory—is actively represented.

This is a different interpretation of the Memorial than what is espoused by the international community who was instrumental in its foundation. International agency representatives, diplomats, and practitioners see this site more as a passive monument. Delegations from around the world come year after year to pay their respects, expressing their sorrow as if this tragedy has been consigned to the past. Some of these actors certainly recognize that the site has challenges, but they are framed more around the pitfalls of memory battles, identity politics, and manipulated narratives in a country where ethno-nationalism and competitive memorialization dominate the discourse.

All of which is true. Nonetheless, the Memorial sits at the juncture where expectations collide about what post-conflict justice, healing, and closure represent to

survivors versus the international community. The latter tend to emphasize the role of memorials, and memory initiatives more generally, as conduits for truth seeking, remembrance, prevention, and educational initiatives.<sup>6</sup> These form a larger group of post-conflict transitional justice mechanisms that also include institutional and rule of law reforms, criminal trials, and monetary reparations.<sup>7</sup> According to Farida Shaheed, the United Nations' (UN) Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights,

The goals assigned to memorialization processes are thus multi-faceted and, regardless of diversity in form and shape, memorials have both private/reflective and public/educative purposes. They are geared not only towards the past (recalling events, recognizing and honouring victims and enabling stories to be related), but equally to the present (healing processes and rebuilding of trust between communities) and the future (preventing further violence through education and awareness-raising). Memorialization processes can promote a culture of democratic engagement by stimulating discussion regarding the representation of the past and contemporary challenges of exclusion and violence.<sup>8</sup>

The sites possess the theoretical, if not always realistic, possibility that their entire egregious histories can be told and/or serve as centers for dialogue between aggrieved communities. There is also acknowledgement that post-conflict memorials must traverse a range of thorny issues that are unique to each particular context. However, these sites' divisiveness are largely framed around clashes between groups, such as survivors and perpetrators, with competing agendas and interpretations about what happened, who is responsible, why it took place, and how it should be explained. The memorial, to use Hinton's characterization, is akin to a political façade, offering a semblance of closure that is not necessarily connected with survivors' realities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 2; Hamber 2008; and Megrét 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Duthie 2010; Hayner 2010; Sharp 2013; and Torpey 2003.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2014, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Hinton 2018, 25.

Atrocity site memorials also hold their own uncomfortable and/or possibly inflammatory memories which might run counter to their efficacies as reparative mechanisms. This is all the more relevant when the sites do not fit neatly within liberal democratic assumptive prescriptions about who is right and wrong, who is innocent and guilty, and who and/or what should be acknowledged versus forgotten. Another challenge concerns how to preserve the physical artifacts and forensic evidence that may linger, creating a direct connection between the past and present.

Collective memory within the transitional justice paradigm is often filtered through a human rights-based discourse, emphasizing, for example, the rights to truth, justice, and redress.<sup>10</sup> A right, in this particular context, is something people either claim as part of their inalienable rights (via international conventions and declarations) or are negotiated and/or are reinstated by transitional justice practitioners and state actors in the aftermath of massive human rights violations.

These rights represent different forms of knowledge (e.g., what happened to them and their loved ones) and action (e.g., bringing the perpetrators to trials). From the vantage point of transitional justice, conversations about memory at these sites emphasize publically acknowledging the harm done as well as sharing information. Memories in this transitional space are primarily about victims' and survivors' legal access to them. There is, however, a different process involved in how those memories are narrated, interpreted,

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<sup>10</sup> On the intersection of transitional justice and the human rights-based discourse at the Srebrenica Memorial, see Wagner 2011. The right to the truth is one of the central features, for example, of truth commissions. See González and Varney 2013. On the right to redress, see the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). "Redress." <https://www.ictj.org/gallery-items/redress>. Accessed July 18, 2018.

and circulated which impact how they are expressed at the site. This is where the collective memory and memorialization discourses pick up the thread.

There is a gulf between where transitional justice's conceptions of memorials as symbolic reparations *end* and where memory battles *begin*. The conversation tends to jump straight from enacting justice into discussions about truth-telling, non-repetition, reconciliation, repair, and so forth. This gap is hard to parse out because memorialization issues are as extensive as they are deep. How these sites' stakeholders negotiate politics and emotions directly impacts what the memorials communicate. This is especially true when they are governed by survivors living in post-conflict societies where justice remains fleeting, painful memories abound, and international interest has shifted elsewhere.

International and local actors have different conceptions and expectations of memorialization initiatives focused on broad outcomes (e.g., the site's symbolic acknowledgement of the atrocity) and grassroots processes (e.g., the site's relationship to the community). Less attention is also paid to the intricate ways that stakeholders remember, erase, abandon, and manipulate memories. Isolating how conflicts about fraught justice and traumatic memories play out across these memorials' walls and properties reveal why they remain sites of both reparation and contestation decades after the crime.

### **The Srebrenica Memorial**

This dichotomy typifies studies about the Memorial. With a handful of exceptions, most fall within two camps.<sup>11</sup> The first emphasize the role of survivors in lobbying for the

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<sup>11</sup> See Bickford 2014; Braun 2014; Björkdahl et al. 2017; Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA) 2016; Nettelfield and Wagner 2014; Selimović 2013; and Wagner 2010 and 2011.

site's location that are connected to post-war refugee return and rebuilding the community. The second focus on how the annual commemoration magnifies ethnic hostilities. When it was established, the site became an example of what localized transitional justice outside of the courtrooms looked like in Bosnia. The site is notable because it remains the sole memorial in the country created in partnership between the international community and survivors.

I argue that segregating discussions about transitional justice's efficacy and the ongoing memory wars direct attention away from the problematic mnemonic practices they foster at the Memorial. Questions about the genocide as well as how victimhood, perpetration, complicity, nationalism, religion, and gender are reflected speak to the complicated production and representation of memories that the paradigm tends to eschew.

The espoused reparative effects of the site as a transitional justice mechanism, in tandem with the mnemonic battles<sup>12</sup> over its traumatic content, both converge in affecting the ways the atrocity's memory is alternately promoted and downplayed by local stakeholders. When we holistically analyze what is taking place across every part of the site, we can observe the spectrum in which Srebrenica's memory is expressed, going from the respectful to the profane as well as from the acknowledged to the omitted.

As I discuss throughout this study, the Memorial was more significant as a transitional justice mechanism when it was founded. Seventeen years later, survivors are still looking for other avenues of justice that may or may not happen. As hope fades, the site's stakeholders continue to use it as a way to maintain the spotlight on Srebrenica vis-

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<sup>12</sup> E. Zerubavel 2003, 2.

à-vis emphasizing victimhood while downplaying the messier parts of the genocide's narrative that they perceive may do more harm than good.

Along the way, they have also sidestepped some issues which are overlooked when we solely analyze the site through either its symbolic location or antagonistic position. Neither of those lenses, for example, leave room to talk about the involvement of the Dutch, the site's frailty as a state institution, or even controversies about who is (and is not) buried there. The Memorial is an even more unique case study because it exists within a country long considered to be transitional justice laboratory, the outcomes of which have arguably produced mixed results.

Why does this matter?

Because conversations with survivors are never just about the Memorial per se. It is always peppered in with references to the people who are still missing, perpetrators who walk free, denial that continues to escalate, and discrimination that is still happening. In the process, the site gets re-entangled with the bigger controversies surrounding Srebrenica's memory and position within the country. Along the way, equally important issues about the site's nuances wind up getting jettisoned. It is also very difficult to section off the Memorial and the events of July 1995 from the bigger tragedy of the last war. Nor is use of the term genocide restricted to Srebrenica in the national discourse. Many nationals and members of the diaspora classify the vicious ethnic cleansing campaigns waged against all "non-Serb peoples" as the Bosnian genocide.<sup>13</sup> Amongst

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<sup>13</sup> See Bećirević 2014; Čekić 2009; Karčić 2016; Sells 1996; and Tokača 2005. For example, the highly controversial 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU Memorandum 1986) emphasized the rationale for Serbian nationalism and the reorganization of the SFRY due to the alleged discrimination and victimization of Serbia within it. A copy of the memo can be found on the Hrvatski Informativni Centar's website. See <http://www.hic.hr/books/greatserbia/sanu.htm>. Accessed February 16, 2018.

Srebrenica's survivors, there is also no clear demarcation between the murderous degradation they endured beginning in 1992 and the catastrophic events of July 1995.<sup>14</sup>

The Memorial is, arguably, the physical manifestation and natural consequence of this situation. We cannot entirely solve the site's micro- and macro-level problems without first addressing the controversies that surround it—a far greater and crucial task for the Bosnian society to tackle.<sup>15</sup> Seen from this light, the site is possibly a metaphor for Bosnia's inertia through its muddled structure, compromised location, and cultivated narrative. Both the Memorial and Bosnia are seemingly stuck in a never-ending transition where justice has been doled out in smaller doses but has not had the kind of transformational impact envisioned by a rotating set of external actors and organizations, including the UN, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY),<sup>16</sup> the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as a myriad of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### **Thematic Literature**

Five themes within the transitional justice and memorialization literature are relevant here. They include: 1) the way that transitional justice defines justice and healing in post-conflict societies; 2) the impact that traumatic memories have on a society's ability to recover; 3) the promise of using memorials and memorialization to foster reconciliation and democratic discussions; 4) the focus on site-specific issues through the prisms of

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<sup>14</sup> See Hasanović 2016; Nuhanović 2017; and Suljagić 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Question that arose out of a discussion with Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> The ICTY was established by the UN in 1993 and was the first European war crimes tribunal since the Nuremberg Trials. See ICTY. History of the ICTY.



mnemonic battles, politicization, and their inherent divisiveness in war-torn societies; and 5) the tensions that arise between local and international actors.

Much of transitional justice remains retributively focused, only coming into play after a conflict has ended, what Sikkink and Kim call the “justice cascade.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, Arthur claims the field perhaps should be renamed “mass atrocity justice.”<sup>18</sup> There remains an overarching emphasis on the pursuit of justice through legal means: criminal prosecutions of high-level perpetrators in international tribunals and their hybrid iterations.<sup>19</sup> These trials are assumed to deliver some sort of justice to the aggrieved population.<sup>20</sup>

However, long after the budgets and timelines associated with transitional justice initiatives end, the conflicts may continue in other forms.<sup>21</sup> Stover posits that justice must consist of several components in order to resonate with survivors. These include consultations between internal and external actors, including victims; clearly defined aims; a mixture of international and national judicial solutions; implementation of other mechanisms, such as truth commissions and memorials; and social justice considerations to help survivors move on with their present-day lives.<sup>22</sup> A more holistic view of justice could, according to Merwe,

consider the sense of vindication provided by the punishment, whether victims have a better understanding of how they came to be victimized, their ability to regain a sense of power relative to the perpetrator, or the reestablishment of a sense of meaning in society, which may have been destroyed by the victimization.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Nagy 2008 and Sikkink and Kim 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur 2009, 363.

<sup>19</sup> Koller 2015; McEvoy 2007, Merwe 2009; and Sharp 2014, 79.

<sup>20</sup> Annan 2004; Duthie 2010; Fletcher and Weinstein 2002; Gray 2010; Hayner 2010; Hellman 2015; Teitel 2003; and Wilson 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Stover and Weinstein 2004, 332.

<sup>22</sup> Stover 2005, 145. See also Hinton 2010; Merwe 2009; Nagy 2008; Sharp 2013; and Torpey 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Merwe 2009, 123.

Violent conflict, mass atrocities, and contested histories also often cover up the psychic, physical, and psychological aspect of trauma. This includes how trauma resonates at the individual, collective, and national levels, creating lingering uncertainty.<sup>24</sup> Edkins argues that survival from brutal and unspeakable human rights violations and mass exterminations is sometimes more traumatic than death. Dying would at least yield some psychic peace for the survivor.<sup>25</sup>

Transformative events such as these can keep the affected societies caught in a perpetual state of ambiguity.<sup>26</sup> Traumatic memories may also render the population incapable of dealing with the conflict's consequences, unable to remake both their identities and their world.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, these damaging experiences may result in unfinished or incomplete burial rituals.<sup>28</sup> This can create an environment where the dead remain alive in spirit, haunting the survivors indefinitely.<sup>29</sup>

Time in the lives of traumatized populations ravaged by ethnic cleansing can also take on uncanny characteristics where horrors of the past continually resurface.<sup>30</sup> This impacts the community's ability to come to terms with what happened while ensuring that traumatic memories prevent them from moving on.<sup>31</sup> These interventions may, albeit unintentionally, exacerbate the societal conundrums and healing processes they profess to

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<sup>24</sup> Fassin and Rechtman 2009, 114; Hamber and Wilson 2003; and Scarry 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Edkins 2006, 99. See also Caruth 1996 and Herman 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Beech 2011, 286, 290; Boss 1996; Thomassen 2015, 42; and Turner 1969, 95.

<sup>27</sup> Kauffman 2013, 278; Suárez-Orozco and Robben 2000, 22; Szokolczai 2015, 30; and Wemmers 2014, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Hertz 2004, 200-201 and Szokolczai 2000, 221.

<sup>29</sup> Gennep 1960, 160-161; Giesen 2015, 65; Green 1994, 241; Howarth 2000, 130; Rojas-Perez 2013, 161; and Žižek 1991, 23.

<sup>30</sup> Borneman 2002, 283; Freud 2001, 219, 224; and Maddrell and Sidaway 2010, 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Boss 1999, 8-9; Herman 1992; and Hinton 2013, 90.

resolve.<sup>32</sup> Repairing social relations is also a process that evolves over time and “in stages.”<sup>33</sup> However, Thomason argues that the way in which the memorialization process unfolds may be reflective of Western approaches to dealing with grief and trauma.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout the implementation of these transitional justice mechanisms, a sort of condescending hierarchy develops about which groups “deserve” assistance and justice through the prioritization of who has “suffered” the most.<sup>35</sup> Victims also become “imagined” (i.e., the “imagined victim”) in order for transitional justice to further its international legal mandate. This, in turn, requires that there be “victims to save,” as opposed to recognizing them as individuals with specific needs.<sup>36</sup> It also obscures the bigger issue of a “society in crisis.”<sup>37</sup> Hamber and Wilson note that even in the case of truth commissions, it cannot be assumed that victims will gain the kind of closure they seek given the incongruencies between their personal needs and that of the nation.<sup>38</sup>

In the aftermath of war, a post-conflict country struggles to find a balance between sincere attempts to articulate the past versus assertions that are founded upon falsities and denial, if a single encompassing narrative is to be forged.<sup>39</sup> Memorials erected at atrocity sites can preserve the memory of the victims, give voice to survivors, and create local spaces for the society to have difficult conversations about how to move forward.<sup>40</sup>

However, these sites may also become pawns in a manipulative political environment

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<sup>32</sup> Biro et al. 2004, 201.

<sup>33</sup> Fletcher and Weinstein 2002; Stover 2005, 107; and Tirrell 2015, 238.

<sup>34</sup> Thomason 2015, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Fletcher 2015, 309 and McEvoy and McConnachie 2013, 490.

<sup>36</sup> Fletcher 2015; Hinton 2013, 90; and McEvoy and McConnachie 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Thomason 2015, 79. See also Rojas-Perez 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Hamber and Wilson 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Hayner 2010, 189; Minow 1998, 119.

<sup>40</sup> Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 2; Hamber 2010; Shaw and Waldorf 2010, 7; Sturken 2011; and UNGA 2014.

doing more harm than good.<sup>41</sup> The need to memorialize a difficult past as well as counteract the vicious denial it elicits is therefore a critical component of memorialization at the macro and micro levels.<sup>42</sup>

Studies about transitional justice tend to focus on the challenges involved in evaluating these mechanisms' abilities to foster social repair, reconciliation, and conflict resolution. They also elaborate upon the diverging interpretations and expectations of retributive and restorative justice programs as well as the role of truth-telling projects (e.g., forums where there is an interplay between acknowledgement, apology, healing, and forgetting).<sup>43</sup> However, what does satisfaction mean to the people these interventions are targeted at, can it be measured, and, if so, how?<sup>44</sup> Recognition, acknowledgement, reparation, accountability, and regime change may be possible, but where do the issues of closure, forgiveness, and revenge fit in?<sup>45</sup> Is satisfaction relevant to communities permanently traumatized, or to families still awaiting the identification/location of their loved ones? In addition, not all groups nor individuals within the same community may feel the same way about the outcomes of these interventions.

Some may believe their expectations have been met, while others less so, and these opinions may also change over time.<sup>46</sup> The two most recent studies by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-

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<sup>41</sup> Stover and Weinstein 2004, 332.

<sup>42</sup> Barsalou and Baxter 2007, 13 and Blustein 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Culbertson and Pouligny 2007; Fletcher 2015; Merwe 2009; Sharp 2013; Tirell 2015; and Weinstein and Stover 2004.

<sup>44</sup> For example, through a quantitative analysis about transitional justice's efficacy, Olsen et al. (2010) concluded that while advancements in the promotion of liberal democratic practices as well as human rights protections did occur, they could not track this back to specific mechanisms.

<sup>45</sup> Duthie 2010; Minow 1998; Stover 2005; and Wagner 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Stover 2005 and Stover and Weinstein 2004.

recurrence also emphasize how weak governance and institutions in post-conflict and post-authoritarian societies impede the realization of transitional justice's potential positive impact.<sup>47</sup> The importance of victims' involvement is underscored, however, this is mostly in relation to providing them with legal justice; memorialization is not mentioned at all.<sup>48</sup>

The specific connection between memorials and social repair remains under-analyzed.<sup>49</sup> Memorialization in the aftermath of war, on the whole, is a complex process involving divisive perspectives amongst aggrieved stakeholders over long periods of time.<sup>50</sup> Discussions about healing and closure are also eclipsed when the memorial is problematized through the lenses of memory battles, ethnic and sectarian hatred, collective guilt, and state instrumentalization. For example, local justice might mean the inclusion of survivors' testimonies at these sites as a way of "representing suffering in a specific place set in a guilty landscape."<sup>51</sup>

Often what is left in the wake of ethnic conflict are complex, albeit stereotypical, categorizations of victims, survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders.<sup>52</sup> Whose historical interpretation of events becomes the dominant, and possibly distorted, narrative is a psychological continuation of the conflict that manifests itself in mnemonic battles where the past and present often merge.<sup>53</sup> To openly refute the history and character of another

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<sup>47</sup> UNGA 2017 and UNGA 2018.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> One recent study released by Björkdahl et al. (2017) attempts to evaluate memorials' potential contributions to peacebuilding efforts by a creating holistic framework that accounts for the interactions between "sites, agents, narratives, and events."

<sup>50</sup> Barsalou 2014; Barsalou and Baxter 2007; Bickford 2014; Naidu 2014; and UNGA 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Robben 2004, 200.

<sup>52</sup> Gray 2010, 65; Mégret 2010; Stover 2005; and Stover and Weinstein 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Halbwachs and Coser 1992, 183; Margalit 2002, 63; Minow 1998, 119; and Stover 2005, 143.

group within this ethnic rivalry begins to erode their common national ties and humanity in favor of strained relations and even open conflict.<sup>54</sup> Exploited narratives of the past can also become invented myths that ethnic groups organize their identities around.<sup>55</sup>

These sites often aggravate relations in communities where those intimately connected to the place viscerally disagree on what happened.<sup>56</sup> Even though an atrocity site memorial's primary purpose is arguably to allow survivors a location to commemorate their dead, "the long-term utility" of these sites is often overshadowed, calling into question their legacy for future generations of survivors, visitors, and educators alike.<sup>57</sup> Still, their symbolism is further bolstered by their forensic significance (e.g., as a crime scene or location of human remains, etc.); the relationships people have with them; and their spatio-temporal connections between what "was" and now "is" that has been physically etched into the post-war landscape.<sup>58</sup>

Because distortions of ethnic narratives and myths frequently play out where mass atrocities have taken place, these sites easily become a new frontline of aggression.<sup>59</sup> This dynamic is further ignited through the painful juncture of perpetrators having to come to terms with their crimes (e.g., through denial, forgetting, or counter-narratives) and victims who demand justice, accountability, and remembrance.<sup>60</sup> What took place is not necessarily represented solely by a set of objective historical, legal, and forensic proof in

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<sup>54</sup> Cole and Barsalou 2006, 9; Hoffman 2002, 280; and Misztal 2007, 383.

<sup>55</sup> Bar-Tal 2003, 78; Dragović-Sosa 2010, 32; and Weinstein and Stover 2004, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Barsalou and Baxter 2007, 6; Halbwachs and Coser 1992, 183; Margalit 2002, 63; Minow 1998, 119; Sandvik 2010, 138; Stover 2005, 143; and Williams 2007, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Hamber 2010, 38; Hoque 2011, 52; and Sturken 2011, 283.

<sup>58</sup> Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 151 and Trigg 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Barsalou and Baxter 2007, 17; Ševčenko 2011, 120; Thomason 2015, 73; and Viejo-Rose 2011, 58.

<sup>60</sup> Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996, 109-110.

communities where there may already be little, if any, agreement on what happened and who is to blame.<sup>61</sup>

The interpretation is filtered through the lenses of victimhood and perpetration creating archetypal roles that may not reflect more complex and contradictory identities, relationships, and behaviors. It is a battle made more complicated when it is distorted through ethnic narratives and myths passed down through the generations.<sup>62</sup> The clashes are not just reflective of the more obvious tensions between survivors and perpetrators. They include divisions within a single community, pitting, for example, the demands of influential stakeholders against the disparate needs of impotent individuals or enabling the surviving community to distance itself from atrocities it may also have committed.<sup>63</sup>

Sticking to the highly entrenched chronicle of events also serves to bolster the affected group's victimhood and/or political influence on the national, regional, and/or international stage.<sup>64</sup> When these memorials exist in communities where genocide denial is rife, there is less room and/or tolerance for the official narrative to deviate from a black and white interpretation of what happened.<sup>65</sup> Aspects of this contested master commemorative narrative may also reflect manipulated symbols, historical turning points, and political ideology.<sup>66</sup> It is important to construe what is left out and why; sometimes it happens for practical reasons, while other times it is unintentional.

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<sup>61</sup> Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 140 and Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996, 104-105, 113.

<sup>62</sup> Dragović-Sosa 2010, 32; Margalit 2002, 35; Robertson and Hall 2007, 20; and Subotić 2015.

<sup>63</sup> Margalit 2002, 35 and Stover 2005, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Ashplant et al. 2000, 22, 51.

<sup>65</sup> Ray 2006, 142 and UNGA 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Rojas-Perez 2013, 165 and Y. Zerubavel 1995, 6.

However, these omissions might also occur because the subject matter is too controversial and/or does not fit within the sanctioned or tolerable narrative.<sup>67</sup>

Stepping out of the conceptual frame of transitional justice—one rooted in specific Western conceptions of democracy, righteousness, progress, charity, and universalism—reveals that these idealized post-conflict mechanisms do not necessarily reflect the “lived” realities of the people to whom these programs are targeted.<sup>68</sup> The transition may be led by outside entrepreneurs, but local citizens and stakeholders are legitimate actors in their own right—even if they do not act as a cohesive unit.<sup>69</sup> Both interact and affect each other in a fluid process, creating new “meanings” as these policies and practices are interpreted from both directions.<sup>70</sup>

Tsing’s concept of friction spotlights the often messy and unexpected outcomes that occur when the global and local intersect.<sup>71</sup> The binary between the international community’s desire to “help” the traumatized populations and the need for survivors to reclaim their agency, humanity, and voice, creates resistance.<sup>72</sup> This comes across clearly during international criminal tribunals which, according to Sharp, establish strict hierarchical parameters about who is on the determining versus receiving end of a particular kind of justice being meted out.<sup>73</sup> He argues that when the local and global intersect, it is harder for the latter to understand the “control, process, and substance” that the local embodies nor can it be questioned for fear of it being considered patronizing.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Edkins 2003, 113; Rieff 2016; and Wertsch and Billingsley 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Hinton 2018, 26. See also Pouligny et al. 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Jones et al. 2013, 89 and Sharp 2014, 103.

<sup>70</sup> Rajaram and Zararia 2009, 462.

<sup>71</sup> Tsing 2005, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Fletcher 2015; Hinton 2010, 9; Jones et al. 2013, 89; and Sharp 2013, 162.

<sup>73</sup> Sharp 2013, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Sharp 2014, 75, 102.



This is all the more troublesome when local interpretations of transitional justice work against international human rights standards.<sup>75</sup> There is also greater recognition amongst scholars and practitioners to integrate these shortcomings into a more expansive approach while building on lessons learned—what Sharp calls “fourth generation transitional justice” and what the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) characterizes as a “mosaic” approach.<sup>76</sup> Hinton pushes the envelope further, arguing that,

Instead of a utopian “better future,” transitional justice might be best viewed as providing new possibilities to spark the imagination and social relations in societies emerging from difficult pasts. This may be as basic as the ability to forget the past, to share coffee or tea with neighbors who were once enemies, or to rebalance one’s relationship to the spirits of the dead—while not achieving an end state of liberal democracy.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Study’s Parameters**

The bulk of this study’s data is from 2016 and I am focused on what is happening at the site now as opposed to the way it was founded in 2001. While the site’s historical context absolutely matters, we need to take into account its life as a powerful political entity—even when that means saying things that the community may find offensive. Analyzing issues related to contested memories obviously does not imply a refutation of established facts nor denial of the genocide. This information has been proven in court cases, prosecutions, and indictments at the ICTY and the War Crimes Chamber in the Court of BiH (WCC). The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) and the national Missing Persons Institute (MPI) unearthed DNA forensic evidence while various international agencies, governments, and NGOs collected data during and after the war. A vast discourse also tackles numerous controversies. This includes debates over whether

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<sup>75</sup> Sharp 2014, 73.

<sup>76</sup> Duthie and Seils 2017 and Sharp 2013. See also Arthur 2009 and Gready and Robins 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Hinton 2018, 7.

the events of July 1995 can legally be classified as a genocide; ongoing disputes over the exact number of Bosnian Muslim (Bošniak)<sup>78</sup> men and boys that were murdered; and whether the UN and Dutchbat were complicit.<sup>79</sup>

Along those lines, my interviewing members of the local Bosnian Serb community was an integral part of understanding the context in which the site exists. Many of those discussions, especially with young people, understandably focused on contemporary life in the town. Others, especially with male political and religious leaders, predictably emphasized an entirely different rendering of events, including genocide denial. This study is about the messages conveyed at the Memorial so I often say “perpetrating community” to avoid wholesale condemnation of the entire Bosnian Serb population. Not every member of that ethnic group is responsible for the atrocities; some civilians were also victims.<sup>80</sup> Along those lines, I refer to survivors and victims in terms of how the site was conceived. It was the living—the survivors—who fought for the right to bury their dead—the victims—in Potočari.<sup>81</sup>

Individuals and feelings are at the heart of this work and so each of my chapters begins with one of their stories. To write about this site is to chronicle how people who are still struggling to put their lives back together decide to memorialize their experiences

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<sup>78</sup> In Bosnian, the singular is *Bošnjak* and the plural is *Bošnjaci*. The use of the moniker as a specific ethno-religious label for Bosnian Muslims originated in the 1960s following calls by the community to be recognized as a distinct group on the census where previously they had been referred to as “Yugoslav undetermined” (Friedman 1996, 155). The term, though, has a much older history of referring to different groups within Bosnia at different times and dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was formally adopted into the Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1994. See Bougarel 2018 and Kalčić 2005.

<sup>79</sup> On classifying Srebrenica as a genocide, see Cassese et al. 2011; Kent 2013; Scheffer 2007; and Southwick 2005. On controversies about the numbers of people killed, see Brunborg et al. 2003; Copley 2003; and Wagner 2008. On international complicity, see Brockman-Hawe 2011; Čekić et al. 2001; Delpha et al. 2012; NIOD 2002; Nuhanović 2007; and Runia 2004.

<sup>80</sup> See Duijzings 2007; Rohde 1997; and Sudetic 1998.

<sup>81</sup> See Leydesdorff 2011, 142 and Stover 2005, 5.

at a specific place. There are daily challenges they face in telling their truths as well as ensuing controversies they intentionally or inadvertently create. There are also injustices they must confront along with painful indignities they do not want to discuss.

Many of the outspoken survivors are known widely in the public sphere by their first names, something especially true when referring to Hasan. In the case of the women who lead the different associations of Mothers, several have made their personal stories of suffering part of public discourse creating a sort of false familiarity with them. I continue that practice by using their first names as well as the collective term, the Mothers. For interviews with current residents of Srebrenica, I use a pseudonym along with their age for identification purposes. There are also five instances where I spoke with representatives from international organizations that were not authorized to comment on the record. I attribute their input simply by listing their agency name and interview date in the footnotes. Finally, I initially write the first and last name of the rest of my interlocutors along with their affiliation (if any) in the text; their last names are used in subsequent mentions.

### *Seeing the Srebrenica Memorial*

Several data gathering-related themes emerged through this ethnographic research that were just as important as my chosen qualitative methods. First, there are multiple levels to how people engage with each other in Bosnia even though so much of the literature focuses on the role of ethnicity. Ethnic identity is obviously a critical aspect of the sociocultural as well as political environment but it does not always tell the complete story. To that end, this study falls within the constructivist paradigm which holds that realities are socially created and ever changing by individuals and groups. According to

Guba and Lincoln, “The aim is understanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve.”<sup>82</sup> In the Memorial’s case, this distinction about shifting meanings is important. There are entrenched tropes about how locals as well as outsiders perceive the site with the ethnic dimension dominating the discussion. However, pushing beyond this frame uncovers tensions between its prominent stakeholders and individual survivors.

The second theme has to do with ethnographic sight. How do we, as researchers, intuit the perspectives, values, and reactions of our interviewees? Both Berger’s concept of “ways of seeing” as well as Baxandall’s notion of the “period eye” speak to the multiple ways we ascribe importance to the visual, societal, and relational cues that frame our environments.<sup>83</sup> To John Berger,

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled.<sup>84</sup>

Although this analysis offers a critical assessment of the Memorial, the practices taking place there cannot be divorced from its historical complexity. Nor can its problematic processes and messages as well as its founders’ motivations and decisions be discounted. As researchers, we have to try to see the world through their eyes before we can interrogate it.

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<sup>82</sup> Guba and Lincoln 1994, 113.

<sup>83</sup> Baxandall 1972 and Berger 1972.

<sup>84</sup> Berger 1972, 7.

The third theme is the challenge of balancing objective assessments, critical reflections, and subjective reactions.<sup>85</sup> As an individual visitor, Bosnia can be a captivating place and the vast majority of people I have encountered are incredibly kind and generous. However, it was sometimes difficult for me to assume the role of a removed observer. This is connected to my Jewish upbringing and subconscious predilection to interpret situations through the lens of victimization (as well as my ongoing struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder/PTSD). As Robben notes,

Fieldwork is not a detached activity carried out by an objective observer, but that subjective experiences and selfhood are part and parcel of fieldwork. The ethnographer's multiple social identities and his or her dynamic self may be liabilities, but they are also research assets.<sup>86</sup>

Subjective feelings also play a role in evaluating atrocity site memorials, the intensity of which may or may not subside after repeated visits.<sup>87</sup> My own experiences, thoughts, and biases are peppered throughout this study. As Robben notes, "Personal anecdotes can reveal the narrator's biography, his or her social and historical context, and life's maturation process."<sup>88</sup> Remaining objective was especially difficult during interviews with several Bosnian Serb stakeholders, all of whom effectively denied the genocide. Seeing firsthand the atrocity's devastating effects on Srebrenica as well as having the opportunity to meet (but not formally interview) more survivors, especially men who survived executions, is as deeply affecting as it is humbling. Although debates still rage

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<sup>85</sup> See Armakolas 2001 and Jones and Ficklin 2012.

<sup>86</sup> Robben 2012, 89.

<sup>87</sup> Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 151. See also Kidron 2013; Nawjin and Fricke 2013; and Simić 2008. I have visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum on three separate occasions. Each time I cycled through a range of painful feelings, although by the third time I was better able to "see" what was taking place. For example, I analyzed the design, narrative, and political message of each of the national pavilions. I also observed the behavior of visitors, including the presence of a disturbing number of small children as well as the circus-like atmosphere at the entrance.

<sup>88</sup> Robben 2012, 89. See also Charmaz and Mitchell 1996.

about whether the mass executions and killings in July 1995 were genocide, it does not actually matter. As a human being, it is abundantly clear what happened—and here is where my clear personal bias comes in.

Even if there is the slightest kernel of truth worth exploring within carefully constructed claims of genocide denial, one need only look around the Srebrenica municipality (*opština*).<sup>89</sup> There is a generation of men who are dead—and they are all Bośniak. I am not talking about looking at the official census. Rather, it is immediately apparent when you start meeting people (mostly women and younger men) and realize that many of their male kin are missing (a point supported by the DNA-led identifications). I have spent an inordinate amount of time sobbing as well as stumbling around in a depressed haze in Srebrenica. Working with all kinds of survivors of intense violence has taken a harsh toll on my emotional well-being over the years.<sup>90</sup> And yet, it is having gone through these painful moments that that veil lifted and I began to see things from a more detached vantage point.

Subjectivity is one facet of how a researcher navigates overlapping issues related to the ways her position (e.g., positionality) impacts her reflections (e.g., reflexivity) about her field site and relationships. Many of my interlocutors, as well as most of Srebrenica's residents, considered my identity as a female researcher from New York City, especially one equipped with nice clothing and expensive electronic gear, as privileged. The intense

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<sup>89</sup> Municipalities in Bosnia as well as throughout the Western Balkans are comprised of numerous towns, villages, and hamlets. The town of Srebrenica is located within the Srebrenica municipality. In Bosnian, the singular for municipality is *opština* and the plural is *opštine*. I will use both terms throughout this study.

<sup>90</sup> On the inherent responsibilities and challenges that forensic experts personally and professionally encounter while working in such intense conditions, see Adam Rosenblatt's 2015 book, *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science After Atrocity*.

financial pressures experienced by many of the people with whom I interacted was difficult to observe.<sup>91</sup> It does not matter what my personal circumstances are; for many, I still own a laptop that costs the equivalent of two to three months of full-time work.

My reception in the field generated quite a bit of introspection about whether I belonged in Bosnia, especially going to execution sites, attending the commemoration, and interviewing both ethnic groups. According to Robertson,

A reflexive anthropologist intentionally or self-consciously shares (whether in agreement or disagreement) with her or his audiences the underlying assumptions that occasion a set of questions. Those interactions in turn guide the ways in which answers to those questions are sought and that ultimately shape the narrative form in which both the questions and answers are posed, interpreted, and analyzed (cf. Ruby 1980).<sup>92</sup>

This kind of reflexivity was a recurring feature in how I approached and conducted all my interviews as well as subsequently examined the content and themes in those interactions. I also discussed how my Jewish identity was connected to this study which is one example of a way, as Brković notes, to bridge my positional difference by identifying areas of commonality between my interlocutors and me.<sup>93</sup>

Paradoxically, the fourth theme focuses on what Robben calls “ethnographic seduction and transference.”<sup>94</sup> Namely, there are distinct power dynamics taking place between the researcher and interviewees, the latter of whom may be traumatized by and/or are the architects of mass violence. These interviews can be hijacked, where the victim or perpetrator wrestles control away from the researcher. When this happens, the

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<sup>91</sup> In two cases I intervened with people I became close with but who were not connected with this study. Other times I was asked to provide job recommendations for people I barely knew; offer support to secure visas for emigration to the US; and lobby the US government to deport accused war criminals.

<sup>92</sup> Robertson 2002, 786.

<sup>93</sup> Brković 2018, 106.

<sup>94</sup> Robben 1996, 71.

conversation is pushed into a different and problematic direction by the former while emotionally drawing in the latter, either sympathetically or fearfully.<sup>95</sup> I was told by numerous colleagues and interviewees that I effectively had to pick a side, which in the case of Srebrenica, is most clearly with survivors. With several Bošniak interviewees, I was expected to adhere to the party line.

For example, a contact at OHR told Munira Subašić (who leads the Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa based in Sarajevo) that she should meet with me because I would tell the “truth” about what happened.<sup>96</sup> In my subsequent interview with her, there was little time to delve into any nuances. Munira has a commanding personality and the majority of her responses were nearly identical to those from our first interview in 2011. In a separate discussion about atrocities committed by all three sides during the war, a Bošniak intellectual used a common circular logic to deflect crimes committed by their “side.” The response would include acknowledgement of the atrocities in the form of, “Yes, but what would have happened if we [the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina/ABiH] had not tortured/killed those people?”<sup>97</sup> This “yes, but” would also feature a distancing technique, attributing the most gruesome crimes to the independent mujahedeen that fought on the Bošniak side.<sup>98</sup> In interviews with three different male

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<sup>95</sup> Robben 1996, 72-73.

<sup>96</sup> Munira lost 22 members of her extended family, including her husband and her younger son.

<sup>97</sup> This discussion began when I raised the criminal mistreatment, including rape, sustained by Bosnian Serb men and women in the Čelebići camp in Konjic run by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ABiH) as well as its survivors’ desire to have a memorial and/or commemoration there. My interviewee disagreed with how the prisoners were treated. Yes, he said, they raped Serb women and tortured nine people, and yes, it must be acknowledged that the ABiH did this. However, he encouraged me to figure out who those specific prisoners were and what would have happened had they not been detained. The implication was that the ABiH acted on the offense to prevent further atrocities against Bošniak civilians. For more information on the camp, including the prosecution of rape as torture, see ICTY. “Sentencing Judgement in the ‘Čelebići Case’.”

<sup>98</sup> Foreign armies and fighters aided each of the Bosnia’s three warring armies throughout the conflict largely but not exclusively divided across religious lines. For example, Russian and



Bosnian Serb stakeholders, a more “seductive” interaction happened. They linked atrocities against Serb civilians during WWII to the last war, effectively moving each conversation in a different direction that implied Serb victimhood and self-defense against marauding Bošniaks.<sup>99</sup>

### *Field Challenges and Hazards*

My physical presence in Srebrenica tended to invite curiosity, suspicion, resignation, and sometimes a mix of all three. I also have the privilege of arriving and leaving the town on my terms. There is an underlying assumption by some in the community that I have money to burn. Case in point: while accompanying my host to a tiny shop in town, another young woman entered. While casually engaging in conversation with my host and the owner, she eyed me up and down asking,

“Are you a donator?”

It is a question that speaks volumes; this is a community very used to getting international support. Many individual families have received aid, especially to rebuild their homes. But I have learned over the years that there is a politics to how this support

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Greek soldiers fought with the VRS and mujahedeen fighters supported the ABiH while independent British soldiers aided all three sides. In 2014, the Association for Transitional Justice, Accountability and Remembrance in Sarajevo and the Center for Democracy and Transitional Justice in Banja Luka released the “Mapping Detention Camps 1992-1995 in BiH” project. The study’s express purpose was to document these atrocity sites irrespective of ethnic group. See <http://cdtp.org/en/dokumentovanje-logora-drugih-zatocenickih-objekata-u-bih/>. Accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> The interlocutors frequently referenced the WWII-era concentration camp of Jasenovac. The numbers of the dead remain hotly contested between Serbs and Croats to this day. Tito’s policy of forcibly closing the chapter on the past by making these mass graves inaccessible has enabled the fight to establish an accurate number of the deceased nearly impossible. This situation also fuels Bosnian Serbs’ assertions that they were also victims of genocide. See Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 71 and Lebow 2006, 22. Subotić (2015) has explored the competing Croatian and Serb narratives of victimization about Jasenovac, specifically as it relates to the use of this specific criminal classification. Thus, the International Crisis Group’s (ICG) reiteration that, “The genocide term [in reference to Srebrenica] has many unwelcome connotations dating to Second World War Yugoslavia that contribute to the [Bosnian] Serbs’ reluctance to use it” (ICG 2011, 23).

is doled out. My presence in Srebrenica there signaled to some that I was supporting my host's family—something I never have done.

Over the years, interview fatigue has affected the population with hundreds of requests to speak. Especially in Sarajevo which is a more frequent base for international study, I was told repeatedly by numerous interlocutors that my request was one of at least a handful they had received that week. There is intense competition to conduct research in Srebrenica, especially in June and July. Many investigators often come for short periods and do not share their findings with their interviewees. Hajra Ćatić, one of two women who lead the Women in Srebrenica based in Tuzla, began our interview with a deep exhale as she said,

“Many of you have already been here.”

Some of this researcher behavior is ethically appalling as several interlocutors recounted, including questions such as, “Do you know any rape or torture survivors I can speak with?” Nor have the vast majority of interviewees seen any sort of transformation in their society or personal lives as a result of all these studies. These issues make finding willing people to interview very difficult. In the case of the Memorial, that meant being redirected back to the same group of survivors: three of the Mothers along with Hasan.

The approach of letting the data “speak” often resulted in my having to tolerate some difficult interactions with interviewees who espoused genocide denial and/or justified atrocities in the name of self-defense. As I was asking some challenging questions, accusations of being a sympathizer trying to equate the number civilian deaths were hurled my way. This issue came up even when I asked interviewees if it was possible on

some level to acknowledge the human catastrophe that befell all Bosnian citizens during the war, rather than separating out the deaths by ethnic group.

Although I have spent quite a bit of time in Srebrenica over the years, 2016 was particularly difficult because I was speaking with members of both the Bošniak and Bosnian Serb communities. This made me visible in ways I had not been previously. I did not like having a public presence, knowing that everyone knew who I was, and more importantly, with whom I was meeting. One international researcher working predominantly with the Bosnian Serb community casually explained that there would be a “price to pay” if I interviewed people from both ethnic groups. The implication was that my position as an objective researcher could engender mistrust and suspicion from both sides in an already charged field site. Simply walking in and out of the local Bosnian Serb memorial room close to the center of town was psychologically uncomfortable. I also felt tremendous guilt about how this research might affect some of my longstanding relationships within the community.

One of this study’s shortcomings is that I do not speak Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (Bosnian). Although I have taken some courses intermittently, I was never in the country long enough to master the language nor had sufficient funding or resources to devote to studying it. There was also a two year gap when I was not in the country at all. This means I have had to rely on interpreters for support with interviews conducted in Bosnian. While the majority of my experiences working with them have been positive, it has not been without its challenges.

Over the years, there have been issues when interviewees only felt comfortable speaking with an interpreter who was of the same ethnicity; times when less experienced

interpreters did not fully translate what was being said and/or changed the question; and professional protocol was not adhered to. This is especially true when I have worked with people who are well-versed in English (and sometimes the subject matter) but who nevertheless revealed some of my personal information and/or posed their own questions—the latter of which sometimes antagonized my interlocutors. In Srebrenica, there was also a dearth of people willing to work with me because it might compromise their relationships in the community; their English was not up to par; and in one extreme case, they were afraid after initially accepting the assignment. Despite these hurdles, I mostly spent time listening and observing people, often for hours at a time. When I could not have an informal conversation with someone or was in a group setting, frequently I would just remain silent.<sup>100</sup>

### *Methods*

The majority of this research was collected over a twelve week period during the summer of 2016 with approval from Rutgers University's Office of Research Regulatory Affairs (IRB#16-569M). I also leveraged material I gathered in 2011 for my master's thesis in accordance with New York University's University Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects (HS#10-0753). My fieldwork was organized into three different thematic bundles: listening, observing, and visiting. It was supplemented by a lengthy review of secondary source material written by academics, practitioners,

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<sup>100</sup> One of the funnier moments came when the matriarch of my host family saw me in conversation with my friend. It was the first night of *Bajram* and I volunteered to clean up all the dishes. After they were finished, I joined my friend on the couch to drink some Bosnian coffee (*bosanska kava*). I had taken a bite of a small piece of sugar before taking a sip, as is the custom. The older woman looked over to her female relative sitting beside her and said, "We should find her a Bosnian husband."

journalists, and civil society representatives as well as documents and legal judgements issued by international governmental agencies and NGOs.

Listening (Interviews): In 2016, I conducted a total of seventy-four semi-structured and unstructured interviews, each averaging about forty-five minutes. These build on the thirty-two interviews from 2011 (eight of whom I met with again in 2016). In most cases, I began asking some standard questions about the site and the conversation would evolve from there. Much of the responses had to do with the person's professional affiliation or personal identity in terms of what we spoke about and whether it was on- or off-the-record (including whether they were willing to sign off on the approved consent form after having been briefed on the required research protocol). Even with these signatures in hand, there are times I decline to cite a particular interlocutor's name to maintain his/her privacy. In all instances of interviews with local individuals from Srebrenica who do not have public personas, I use an alias in the text and only cite them according to their gender, age, and *opština*.

There were two types of interview subjects; the first were individual citizens who had some connection to the Srebrenica *opština*, either because they lived there or were survivors. The second were "formal subjects," including: 1) staff and board members of the Memorial; 2) domestic experts, academics, journalists, activists, and civil society representatives; 3) staff members from national and international NGOs; 3) representatives from international organizations; 4) political figures, religious leaders, and community leaders in Srebrenica; 5) members of victims' associations; 6) people involved in various aspects of the site's foundation and/or design; 7) high-profile survivors in charge of the site; and 8) other individuals to whom I was referred.

Twenty-three interviews were conducted in Bosnian; the rest in English. In Sarajevo, I worked with a rotating set of professional interpreters (who did either simultaneous or consecutive interpretation) given that many of my meetings were set up on short notice. No one from Sarajevo was available and/or willing to travel to Srebrenica. A significant number of my interviews with representatives from international agencies and NGOs happened because I leveraged my existing network of contacts (e.g., snowball and purposive sampling).

In Srebrenica, a young female Bosnian Serb acted as my translator and gatekeeper. She helped to identify people, including a number of Bošniak as well as Bosnian Serb individuals and stakeholders (e.g., snowball sampling). Some people within the Bosnian Serb community refused to speak with me because of this study's focus. There is a bias against researchers working on this topic because they tend to condemn Bosnian Serbs. Others who agreed frequently chose to talk about contemporary life. Interviews that diverged from my study's focus filled in another part of Srebrenica's story by bringing the town's calamitous history as well as contemporary struggles into greater clarity.

Beyond the interview with Mladen Grujičić, the then mayoral candidate (and now mayor), there were three other prominent Bosnian Serb stakeholders I interviewed in Srebrenica. One spoke off-the-record in an unofficial capacity on September 2, 2016. In the case of the second one, I am declining to use his name (although he is a public figure) because the interview had intimidating moments that I describe in detail. Moreover, to reveal his name would also compromise the identity of the village where I spoke with one woman whose anonymity I wish to protect. Even so, all of these persons were fully briefed on the study's research protocol and signed the required consent form.

Observing (Participant Observation): While in Srebrenica, I spent a great deal of time observing daily life and writing daily field notes. According to Bernard,

Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture and learning to remove yourself every day from that immersion so you can intellectualize what you've seen and heard, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly.<sup>101</sup>

There is a difference between visiting and really seeing Srebrenica (just as much as there is between objectifying and respecting its residents). In the former, its attendant sadness, hardships, and complexities appear inextricably linked with its genocidal past, especially as the town's visitors swell in July. In the latter, not every single thing is profoundly messed up strictly because of the genocide, but perhaps also related to the greater morass that characterizes contemporary Bosnia. Admittedly, I have experienced Srebrenica, and the people who live there, in both ways over the years.

For this study, I attended the range of commemorative events, including: 1) the arrival of the coffins at the Memorial on July 9th; 2) the arrival of the commemorative peace march's (*marš mira*) participants in Potočari as well as the transfer of the coffins from the Battery Factory to the cemetery on July 10th; 3) the commemoration on July 11th; and 4) the visit to the execution sites with the Mothers on July 13th. Over the years, I have attended the annual commemoration five times; the full range of commemorative events four times, and accompanied the Mothers' twice.

I was granted access to two of the three locked exhibitions inside the Battery Factory as well as allowed to view some of the visitor books signed by dignitaries from previous years. In addition, I toured the site independently on numerous occasions. I also visited the Bosnian Serb memorial room in Srebrenica and attended the Alliance of Independent

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<sup>101</sup> Bernard 2011, 258.

Social Democrats (*Savez Nezavisnih Socijaldemokrata*; SNSD) rally held in Srebrenica's House of Culture (*Dom kulture*), led by RS President Milorad Dodik on September 2, 2016 in advance of Srebrenica's municipal elections. Many afternoons were also spent in different villages throughout the Srebrenica *opština* since 2010.

Documenting (Photographs): Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I have taken approximately 800 photographs. These images provide a valuable visual accounting of how the site has changed over the past seven years. I also documented events I attended as well as other public atrocity sites I visited. The pictures includes signage, posters, and other imagery located in and around the Srebrenica *opština* as well.

To understand more about the fraught nature of Bosnian memorialization, I also ventured outside of Srebrenica. In 2011, I visited Kozarac and attended the annual Omarska concentration camp commemoration as well as returned with another researcher to independently explore the former concentration and rape camp, Trnopolje. We visited both parts of the WWII Jasenovac concentration camp in Donja Gradina as well as in Jasenovac, Croatia.<sup>102</sup> That same year I attended an inter-ethnic ceremony to mark the International Day of the Disappeared in Brčko as well as the unveiling of a new monument there. I visited the Yugoslav-era memorial on Mount Kozara as well as

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<sup>102</sup> The site is split between the bordering towns of Jasenovac, Croatia and Donja Gradina, Bosnia. On the Croatian side is the Jasenovac Memorial Site (Camp III; "Brickworks") that includes a museum (built with the support of Yad Vashem in Israel) and a massive Yugoslav-era concrete "Flower Memorial" that dominates the landscape. While the museum's aesthetic is in keeping with other Western European Holocaust remembrance sites, it is not at all clear, unless you tour the site with a guide, that it was the Croatian Fascists (*Ustaše*) and not the Nazis who committed the crimes. The Donja Gradina site in the RS is primarily comprised of a forest with deep mounds in the ground and large areas of concrete that were mass graves. Rusted human soap making machinery is also on display. The small plaques in the center of the forest bear signage showing the numbers of Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies (Roma) killed there. Blame is squarely directed at the *Ustaše*. Insights based on my independent visit in 2011. See Jasenovac Memorial Site. <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=5020>. Accessed February 16, 2018.



interviewed the local Imam in Ahmići as well. I also attended the Bosnian-Serb counter-commemoration and burial service in Bratunac on July 12, 2012. Finally, this study reflects insights gleaned from my visits to other similar sites around the world, including those across Western and Eastern Europe as well as in South and Southeast Asia.

### **The National and Regional Environment**

There is nothing straightforward about examining the Memorial without acknowledging the constellation of issues closely related to Srebrenica, Bosnia, and the Western Balkans. It is now twenty-three years after the war ended and four things are abundantly clear. The first is that the region as a whole is sliding backwards, lagging in democratic reforms required for European Union (EU) ascension. For example, the 2018 European Commission's (EC) report stressed the urgency for the region to undertake meaningful reconciliation reforms and reparations; resolve war-related human rights-related issues; and end widespread impunity for accused war criminals.<sup>103</sup> Previous successes with democratization in Bosnia remain overshadowed by corrupt political elites maintaining power through a variety of ways. The most obvious is the calculated promotion of ethno-nationalist rhetoric via a tightly controlled media environment.

Fake political scandals are used to divert attention away from the pillaging of public and state resources for personal gain, a veneer maintained through the illusion of free and fair elections that also hides voter fraud.<sup>104</sup> As the EU's presence in Bosnia continues to wane, concerns about Russia's gambits in the country are steadily increasing.<sup>105</sup> This is

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<sup>103</sup> European Commission (EC) 2018.

<sup>104</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI) 2016; Bieber 2018; EC 2018; and Mujanović 2018.

<sup>105</sup> Bajrović et al. 2018 and Mujanović 2017b and 2018. According to Mujanović, there is at least the possibility of violence if Dodik thinks it will enable him to stay in power. (The alternative being he is jailed for corruption). Not all scholars and experts agree on Russia's overtures inside

all the more troubling given reports of an infusion of high powered weapons into the Republika Srpska (RS) that coincided with the arrival of a Russian paramilitary group (which previously fought in the Ukraine) ahead of the October 2018 entity-level elections.<sup>106</sup> The instrumentalism of Balkan elites runs deep to the peril of the population.

Equally concerning are the financial investment, religious influence, and political overtures by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran who are all fueling the country's thriving arms exports as well as tourism from the Persian Gulf states.<sup>107</sup> Concerns about the radicalization of Bosnian citizens emigrating to conflicts in the Middle East are also on the rise. There have been some bright spots in terms of multi-ethnic protests, though, such as those that took place in Tuzla in 2014, which have galvanized a new generation of activists in fighting against the entrenched political system.<sup>108</sup> We also cannot underestimate regional issues with Croatia and Serbia. As Davorka Turk of the Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA) noted, "When Croatia sneezes, Serbia sneezes but Bosnia catches pneumonia," a point shared by Mirsad Tokača of the Research and Documentation Centre (RDC).<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps most troubling of all is the glorification of war criminals, many of whom have resumed public life.<sup>110</sup> In Serbia, far fewer indictments against the genocide's perpetrators are issued while state rhetoric continues to flout denial as well as silence

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Bosnia. For example, Bechev (2017) argues that Russia has long been a soft power in the region which has been overblown as relations between the East and West deteriorated.

<sup>106</sup> Borger 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Bishku 2016 and Spaić 2017a.

<sup>108</sup> Arsenijević 2015; Husanović 2015; Kurtović and Hromadžić 2017; and Mujanović 2017a.

<sup>109</sup> Personal interviews: Davorka Turk, Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA), August 2, 2016 and Mirsad Tokača, Research and Documentation Centre (RDC), August 9, 2016.

<sup>110</sup> Council of Europe 2018 and BIRN 2017.

around the crime.<sup>111</sup> Case in point: the convicted Bosnian Serb war criminal prosecuted for crimes in Srebrenica, Vinko Pandurević, participated in a 2018 Serbian government event despite widespread condemnation from activists.<sup>112</sup> Whether renewed interest in the long stalled process to create a truth commission to deal with crimes committed in the 1990s will be successful (also known as RECOM) remains to be seen.<sup>113</sup>

The second is that there continue to be war-related issues that have still not been resolved and/or have reached a stalemate. In the immediate post-war years, the emphasis was on political justice issues, such criminal prosecutions at the ICTY and their national and cantonal equivalents as well as on refugee return and institutional reforms at both the state and entity levels.<sup>114</sup> However, other problems, such as the issuance of monetary reparations and additional aid mechanisms for survivors (especially for female survivors of rape) have not been nearly as successful such as those granted to veterans, the most influential lobby group in the country.<sup>115</sup> Conversely, equally critical reforms and priorities, including grassroots social justice initiatives, economic revitalization, and ongoing discrimination, have received less attention.<sup>116</sup>

The third is the impossibility of undertaking political and institutional reforms at the state and entity levels. These remain virtually impossible since any proposed changes

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<sup>111</sup> A Srebrenica-related trial held in Serbia in which eight Bosnian Serb policemen are accused of killing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 Bośniak prisoners during the Kravica warehouse massacre on July 13, 1995 continues to be marred by delays. Associated Press 2018. See also Biserko 2012; Obradović-Wochnik 2013; and Završnik 2016.

<sup>112</sup> Rudić 2018.

<sup>113</sup> BIRN 2018. RECOM is a regional commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia from January 1, 1991 until December 31, 2001. See RECOM. <http://recom.link>. Accessed March 22, 2018. See also Dragović-Soso 2016; Irvine and McMahon 2013; and Kurze and Vukusić 2013.

<sup>114</sup> Clark 2014 and Nettelfield 2010.

<sup>115</sup> BTI 2016.

<sup>116</sup> Barkan and Bećirbašić 2015; Civil Rights Defenders 2015; and Human Rights Watch (HRW) 2017.

must work within the weak federal structure of the state, a legacy of the General Framework Agreement for Peace also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA).<sup>117</sup> Any modifications must be filtered through and accepted by both of Bosnia's two quarreling territorial entities if they are to have any effect. Yet, in a country with no less than fourteen separate governments (the Bosnian state, the entity of the RS, the entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), ten cantonal ones in the FBiH, and a separate one in Brčko), how meaningful political change can take place within this fractured structure is unknown.<sup>118</sup>

The fourth problem is the ethno-political rhetoric that has stymied Bosnia's fledgling civil society. Rather than encouraging democratic notions of inclusion, tolerance, and citizenship, the political atmosphere more often promotes a competitive climate based on perceived, manipulated and/or actual suffering.<sup>119</sup> A large infusion of international cash after the war created a "NGO boom" resulting in a couple of thousand micro-organizations.<sup>120</sup> This has created a culture of both dependence on outside funding and support as well as incentives to create associations strictly for monetary benefit. One direct consequence has been the formation of hundreds of mono-ethnic victims' associations, each focused on a subset of the population and all clamoring for attention.

### **Fraught Justice**

The history of what happened by and to whom during the last war remains dangerously divisive in the region where ethnic nationalism is yet again on the rise. This

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<sup>117</sup> Aitchison 2011; ICG 2014; Jeffrey 2013; Office of the High Representative (OHR) 1995; and Pejanović 2007.

<sup>118</sup> Nardelli et al. 2014 and Mujanović 2017a.

<sup>119</sup> Hoogenboom and Vielle 2010 and Jeffrey and Jakala 2015.

<sup>120</sup> Helms 2014 and McMahon 2017.

environment is promulgated by politicians who are intent on exploiting it for personal gain. The narratives, for example, have not only hardened, they have become virtually impenetrable, interspersed with subjective classifications of entire ethnic groups as victims and perpetrators. Many of my interviewees spoke of the challenges of living within a society that has three mutually exclusive versions of the truth. Nedim Jahić, a young activist involved in politics and memorialization, said that when you ask a question that goes beyond their particular narrative, the response always begins with, “Here’s what they did to us.”<sup>121</sup> The answer is rarely, “We did it and we were wrong,” according to Anne-Marie Esper-Larsen, the then Representative of United Nations Women (UN Women) in Bosnia.<sup>122</sup> No one is a loser, she said, but everyone still lost.

Dženana Karup-Druško, head of the Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, told me she is routinely accused of creating “untruths” by victims’ associations when she says that they, along with politicians, are still manipulating the truth. She pointed out that the country’s current situation is connected to the fact that Serbia’s then Prime Minister Slobodan Milošević was seen as a legitimate peace partner. Instead of bringing them closer together, it pushed the communities further apart with their own truths.<sup>123</sup> The ICTY is considered the arbiter of truth by many of my interviewees even though the court’s sole responsibility is to prosecute criminals; it is not responsible for writing a comprehensive accounting of the conflicts. In a war where three ethnic groups (each aided by foreign mercenaries) fought against each other and

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<sup>121</sup> Personal interview, Nedim Jahić, activist, August 8, 2016.

<sup>122</sup> Personal interview, Anne-Marie Esper-Larsen, then Representative, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Personal interview, Dženana Karup-Druško, head of the Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016.

committed civilian atrocities (be it offensively or defensively), legal justice is clearly fraught. It also means that each group can simultaneously be both victims and perpetrators—something that clearly does not fit within the competing and entrenched narratives of ethnicized victimhood.

Saying that certainly does not mean that scale of the crimes is in any way equal. Nor does it lessen the joint criminal responsibility of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), under the direction of Milošević, and the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS), under the leadership of Colonel General Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić (founder of the Serb Democratic Party (*Srpska Demokratska Stranka*; SDS) and first president of the RS)—all of whom were culpable in starting the war and waging the gruesome ethnic cleansing campaigns that would define the conflict.

The overt implication, though, is that all Bosnian Serbs are responsible. This, in turn, fuels genocide denial and Bosnian Serb nationalism as well as ongoing political provocations against the Bosnian state by the RS. Moreover, because they are all portrayed as perpetrators, Bosnian Serb women's wartime experiences, including sexual violence, are virtually ignored, according to Lejla Mamut, the Conflict Related Sexual Violence Coordinator at UN Women in Bosnia.<sup>124</sup>

There have been a number of important legal successes in prosecuting the massacre's high-level criminal masterminds. In addition to the ICTY's Radislav Krstić case that proved genocide had taken place, the count of genocide was subsequently reaffirmed during the 2017 Mladić and 2016 Karadžić verdicts.<sup>125</sup> Remaining appeals, legal

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<sup>124</sup> Personal interview, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>125</sup> In 2004, Krstić was sentenced to 35 years in prison for his role in "aiding and abetting genocide, murders, extermination and persecutions in Srebrenica. See ICTY. "Case Information Sheet "Srebrenica-Drina Corps" IT-98-33: Radislav Krstić." In 2016, Karadžić was sentenced to

procedures, and the archival of the court's documentation will be handled by the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals as the ICTY formally shut down December 2017 in accordance with its mandate.<sup>126</sup>

Despite these trials as well as those of low-level perpetrators in national and cantonal courts, many survivors have not experienced the kind of justice, recognition, and reparations that Bosnia's transitional justice programs have envisioned.<sup>127</sup> The likelihood that people still missing from the war will ever be found is increasingly unlikely because far fewer mass graves being discovered. Having begun work in 1996, the ICMP is in the final phase of transitioning out of the country, although it will remain closely involved with the ongoing efforts of its national counterpart, the MPI.<sup>128</sup> In short, one kind of justice survivors continue to clamor for—locating, recognizing, and returning their kin—may never happen.

Srebrenica's survivors also continue to experience discrimination, something exacerbated by the 2016 election of Srebrenica's first Bosnian Serb mayor since the war's end.<sup>129</sup> They are equally resigned as well as exasperated; the international

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forty years imprisonment, "convicted of genocide in the area of Srebrenica in 1995, and of persecution, extermination, murder, deportation, and inhumane acts (forcible transfer) as crimes against humanity, as well as terror, murder, unlawful attacks on civilians and the taking of hostages as violations of the laws and customs of war." See ICTY. "Radovan Karadžić Case—Key information & Timeline." In 2017, Mladić was sentenced to life imprisonment and found guilty for his role in masterminding the genocide, including "persecutions, extermination, murder, deportation, inhumane acts, terror, unlawful attacks, [and the] taking of hostages." See ICTY. "Ratko Mladić Case—Key information & Timeline."

<sup>126</sup> On the ICTY's closure, see <http://www.icty.org/en/press/icty-marks-official-closure-with-moving-ceremony-in-the-hague>. On the UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, see <http://www.unmict.org/en>. Both accessed February 16, 2018.

<sup>127</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry 2013; Clark 2014; Council of Europe 2012; Hodžić 2010; Nettelfield 2010; Nettelfield and Wagner 2014; Orentlicher 2010; Selimović 2010; Stover 2005; and Zyberi and Černić 2015.

<sup>128</sup> International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Hopkins 2016; Nettelfield and Wagner 2014; and Spaić 2017b. The election of a Bosnian Serb mayor in Srebrenica is all the more disturbing since the young mayor categorizes the genocide as

community continues to let them down. Justice also has no tangible consequences on the ground, according to Ćamil Duraković, Srebrenica's then mayor. He asked me whether it was fair that one group can commit this crime [of genocide], gain the territory, and kill all these people while the modern world accepts it. "They took away our language, land, and life. It is like the Gestapo is protecting us [Bošniaks]," he said.<sup>130</sup>

There was also something unexpected that came up: the population's weariness in dealing with, much less, talking about transitional justice. On numerous occasions, interlocutors would let out an audible outbreath about the subject of this study. It is an over-researched topic, one that fuels innumerable studies and books and there is virtually no question that has been left out. It is also clear that Srebrenica leads the national (and, arguably, international) zeitgeist about the last war. Some scholars and practitioners refer to this fixation as "Srebrenization," a term originally used by Dodik to push back against nationalist Bošniak claims that the RS was a "genocidal creation."<sup>131</sup> Still, the moniker has relevance from an analytical viewpoint, even if it can only be made by an outside transitional justice researcher. Karup-Druško told me that if she is publically attacked when she asks whether Srebrenica dominates the discourse.<sup>132</sup>

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a "huge tragedy" but refuses to acknowledge it as genocide. Rather, he emphasizes the fact that Bosnian Serbs were killed in larger numbers prior to July 1995 but who have been thoroughly ignored by the international community. Denial of these Bosnian Serb civilian deaths is a refrain that was repeated (at times often verbatim) by a number of Bosnian Serb officials and community representatives I met. For them, the trials at the ICTY of high-level Bosnian Serb military leaders is an abomination and an ongoing signal of their ethnic group's vilification. Personal interview, Mladen Grujičić, then mayoral candidate for Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>130</sup> Personal interview, Ćamil Duraković, Srebrenica's then mayor, August 26, 2016.

<sup>131</sup> Azinović et al. 2011; Tepšić 2017; and Toal 2013.

<sup>132</sup> Personal interview, Dženana Karup-Druško, Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016.



This fixation on Srebrenica is also due to its unique status as being the sole wartime atrocity to be legally classified as a genocide, a point mentioned by several interviewees. This is much to the chagrin of many other communities which were decimated, such as the villages in the Prijedor municipality in Northwest Bosnia, the location of some of the war's most notorious detention and rape camps, including Omarska, Trnopolje, and Keraterm.<sup>133</sup> That said, Elmina Kulasić, an activist with the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide, told me that Srebrenica serves as a good starting point for conversations about atrocities committed elsewhere, the ICTY's importance, and the Mothers' activism so that she does not have to explain everything from scratch.<sup>134</sup>

### **Navigating the Study**

Srebrenica's unwieldy memory makes this type of comprehensive study all the more novel since I am filtering everything through the Memorial's five core components: its location, cemetery, commemoration, exhibitions, and physical structures. Chapter 2 (*The Location: Community Cleavage, Compromised Justice*) begins with a summary about the war, the genocide, and the Memorial's foundation. I argue that paternalistic relationships between local and outside actors create unexpected outcomes that directly or indirectly affect how these sites are managed. Just because there is an internationally-sanctioned memorial to the 1995 genocide does not mean that its physical existence remains guaranteed nor devoid of political interference. This is a site where the survivors have been doubly traumatized having their male kin separated from them under the supposed

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<sup>133</sup> See Ahmetašević 2015; ICTY 2005; Sarkin et al. 2014, 64; Sivac-Bryant 2016; and Trbovc 2014. The first group of criminal prosecutions undertaken by the ICTY focused on Prijedor. See ICTY. "Crimes Before the ICTY: Prijedor."

<sup>134</sup> Personal interview, Elmina Kulasić, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

protection of the international community who stood by as it happened. “Srebrenica” is also a complex discursive and physical space which has direct implications for analyzing the atrocity, the town, and the site.

Normative assumptions about transitional justice focused on the progression from chaos to equanimity also obscure larger issues about the site’s sovereignty as a state institution. The Memorial is located in the RS whose intermittent threats of secession threaten to destabilize it as well as the safety of Srebrenica’s Bošniak returnees. The entity is filled with symbols of exclusion that reinforce the paradox of the site (and Srebrenica) having been awarded to the same ethnic group, Bosnian Serbs, who murdered them. The Memorial’s location and stewardship reflect these tensions, calling into question its reparative status almost two decades later.

In Chapter 3 (*The Cemetery: Private Reflection, Public Controversy*), I build upon Verdery’s argument, pointing out that the bodies of the dead can also become ethno-nationalist political tools to shape the discourse about their murders.<sup>135</sup> In the case of the Memorial, I turn my attention towards what is possibly the site’s most striking feature: the cemetery. Each of the 8,372 victims has a personal story to tell. Their chronicles, though, are frequently overshadowed by widespread genocide denial as well as memory battles with the Bosnian Serb community. The cemetery also contains lesser known controversies and disagreements amongst survivors that are simultaneously downplayed by the site’s stakeholders and exploited by deniers. I argue that silences around these particular issues ironically encourage this antagonism. In 2001, the cemetery represented a specific kind of reparative and political justice for survivors by allowing them to bury

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<sup>135</sup> Verdery 1999.

their dead close to home. Is the Memorial's significance the same decades later? I also explore how the site's supposed neutrality is challenged by both its religious orientation as well as underlying sentiments about revenge and justice that are interwoven throughout the burial grounds.

I argue in Chapter 4 (*The Commemoration: Personal Moments, Profane Memorialization*) that memorials of this kind are really sites of contestation where the wars over memories are waged. The site's annual commemoration remain a flashpoint for genocide denial as well as the production of Bosnian Serb "countermemories" and counter-commemorative events.<sup>136</sup> The July 11 event turns the Memorial into an icon for Bośniak victimhood, sometimes at the expense of the needs and/or wishes of individual survivors. These issues contribute to an increasingly entrenched discursive battle between two sets of stakeholders: those who survived and those who committed the crime.

However, another painful tension is exposed during the commemoration: one between powerful stakeholders and disempowered individuals, nearly all of whom are survivors. Through the rituals of the mass burials as well as individual religious services, I also argue that the event transmits two kinds of memory at the individual and collective levels through "postmemory" and "vicarious witnessing."<sup>137</sup> July 11 is also a commemorative "turning point" that enables the Bośniak political and religious establishment to turn the event into a political rally as well as public circus.<sup>138</sup> Lingerings just below the surface are also a host of controversies and political messages concerning

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<sup>136</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995.

<sup>137</sup> Hirsch 2008 and Zeitlin 1998.

<sup>138</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995.

how the dead, including their bones, are identified, characterized, and finessed which keep the conflict's cleavages dangerously open.

In Chapter 5 (*The Installations: Hegemonic Narrative, Selective Voices*), I argue that the stories featured in these memorials often represent certain narratives, perspectives, events, and timeframes that are privileged over others. I explore how and why the Memorial's exhibitions reveal a disjointed message and often confusing historical narrative based largely on the perspective of high-profile survivors. This is a site engulfed in two battles. One is over the "truth" where two entire communities—that of Bośniaks and Bosnian Serbs—are cast into stark binaries of good or evil, innocence or guilt, and victim or perpetrator. The other concerns what happens when bits of grey appear in the form of the third actor in Srebrenica's tragedy: the Dutch peacekeepers. The result is a dysfunctional set of exhibitions that sidestep some of the thornier topics about the agency of the genocide's victims and survivors as well as the Dutch's complicity in the crime that is embedded within the Srebrenica experience beginning in 1992. I also explore how and why the temporal focus on July 1995 underscored by Srebrenica-specific transitional justice mechanisms obscure significant parts of the 1992-1995 war as well as impede the site's ability to fully educate visitors about what transpired.

I argue in Chapter 6 (*The Property: Forgotten Spaces, Taboo Memories*) that choices about what to physically preserve at these sites are indicative of larger issues about what to remember and what to forget. I explore the parts of the Battery Factory complex containing different kinds of memories that are altered, erased, and/or intentionally being allowed to decay. While the exhibitions are designed to explain what happened during the

genocide, forensic evidence remains locked within the cavernous halls, painted partitions, and ramshackle buildings that are rapidly deteriorating.

One memory in particular has been abandoned, the mass grave on the property, which is likely connected to the Dutch's politicized intervention. At the same time, the stories about women's experiences are highly mediated, focusing almost exclusively on their relationships to their dead male kin, despite their being integral to the site's foundation. I also argue that these issues represent unanticipated battles over who retains authority over the site as well as what will and/or can be acknowledged. These decisions, in turn, affect the site's ability to fully educate visitors about the totality of what transpired, especially when they replicate socio-cultural norms and taboos.

In Chapter 7 (*Conclusion: Through the Looking Glass*), I discuss how and why the Memorial as well as similar sites may remain fraught long after they are established. How do we account for their intensely symbolic meaning to survivors while analyzing the challenges they present as the passage of time between the site's foundation and the crime increases? Should we adjust our expectations and take into account the experiences and motivations of those tasked with running them? I conclude by advocating the importance of critically evaluating these sites, especially when interrogating uncomfortable aspects of their memories and practices, within highly charged environments.

## Images



Figure 1.1: "*Majkama, Ženama i Djeci, Srebrenice*" ("To the Mothers, Women and Children at Srebrenica") statue in front of the Srebrenica Memorial's administrative offices.

Donated by Kamp Westerbork Memorial Centre and the artist, Truus Menger, 2015.

Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 1.2: Overview of the Srebrenica Memorial: cemetery (foreground) and the Battery Factory (background), August 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 1.3: “UN” concrete blocks preserved in glass housing, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

## **Chapter 2: The Location—Community Cleavage, Compromised Justice**

I'd never been aware how beautiful my house is, until I saw it burning.

— Goran Simić  
“A Scene, After the War”



### **The White Tombstone**

A single white tombstone with no etchings stands towards the right side of the cemetery near the entrance, close to the jagged stone denoting the number of Srebrenica's victims. It sits near the edge of a patch of grass that borders one of the paved paths and is designed exactly like the thousands of others that surround it (Figure 2.1). Many of the other powerful markers clustered nearby make it easy to overlook this solitary tomb. It was the first of its kind in the cemetery back in 2002, a year after the Memorial was founded. It now serves as a reminder for how much things have evolved in constructive and challenging ways. At its heart, though, lies an incredibly tender meaning: it represents the voices of survivors calling out for those still lost to find their way home.

Initially, the female survivors, the press corps, and the international community thought the men were just missing, according to Aida Čerkez, a local Associated Press journalist. There were rumors the men would be part of prisoner exchange, that they were in Batkovici and the Red Cross was going to find them. Then story changed: the men were taken to a mine in Serbia. When three survivors of the executions emerged, it started to sink in that they had been massacred.<sup>139</sup>

The scale began to unfold as aerial photos of the primary mass graves as well as large numbers of prisoners gathered in specific locations circulated. In its haste to cover up the crimes, the VRS dug up the graves and deposited their contents in secondary and tertiary locations.<sup>140</sup> Over the years, many of these pits would be exhumed, leading to the DNA-led identification of thousands. The ruthless re-dumping of the victims' bodies, now in various states of decomposition, meant that many of their bones (what Wagner calls

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<sup>139</sup> Čerkez 1995.

<sup>140</sup> For a detailed analysis of the search, recovery, and identification process, see Wagner 2008.

“mortal remains”) would be scattered across the region, making identification that much more difficult if not impossible.<sup>141</sup>

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The oppressive summer heat is an inescapable facet of life in Eastern Bosnia’s Drina River Valley (Podrinje). Within an hour or two after the commemoration on July 11 ends, Srebrenica starts to settle back down into its sleepy existence. No doubt the energy remains charged as various incarnations of the Bosnian Serb community’s counter-commemorations take place on July 12th. By the thirteenth, there are few foreigners left in the town. There is no break for many of Srebrenica’s surviving women, though. Their losses remain palpable, often acutely felt, even if they have managed to achieve some sort of daily routine. For many of them, July 11th is the pinnacle of the horror that irrevocably altered their lives, a point that came up in nearly all of my interviews with survivors.

And so for many years now on July 13, the Mothers set out to visit nine of the execution sites. The white house (*bijela kuća*) next door to the cemetery.<sup>142</sup> The dam and school in Petkovci. The primary school in Orahovac. The warehouse turned agricultural shed in Kravica. The former military farm that is now an empty field surrounded by new homes in Branjevo. The football pitch in Nova Kasaba. The *Dom kulture* in Pilica. Many of the women know that these are the places where their loved ones were massacred. The day is hot and the buses are sweltering. A small security detail is supplied by the RS since

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<sup>141</sup> Wagner 2008, 11. As a result, the identification of these bodies was highly complicated given that the bones of individuals were dispersed across many random locations. In one case, the remains of one man were found in three separate locations in the approximately 100 graves that comprised these sites. Briefing at the Podrinje Identification Facility, July 2010.

<sup>142</sup> There is another infamous *bijela kuća* at the Omarska concentration camp outside of Prijedor where some of the most gruesome tortures and mutilations occurred.

this journey, like the small white tombstone, embodies two entangled missions about memory and justice.

The women are here to remember their kin while sending a signal that they have a right to come to these places. Why? These sites, just like Srebrenica, are now a part of the RS, a territory they say was carved out of their homes and bodies. Through painstaking negotiations, they secure brief access to these wretched places located deep within the countryside, several of which are in hostile villages. Two minutes in the front yard of the *bijela kuća* since a family lives there. Five minutes inside Pilica because there is a growing group of angry men gathering outside. Ten minutes in Petkovci where two local security guards oversee the scene from atop the dam. Some of the sites are easier to visit because they are close to the roads or in village centers, while others require longer walks for access. The buses become ovens, heating up as the day wears on.

The men come to mind, not as skeletons, bones, or as collective group of victims but as individuals. Going to the places where they were executed was the end of their story, until those who were identified were brought home. What did they think when they were forced onto trucks, some with their hands already bound? When they were being driven to some godforsaken place with no sense, or perhaps a sinking suspicion, of the gruesome fate that awaited them?

The caravan's last stop is at the mass grave in Kozluk where the remains of 805 men have been discovered since 2015.<sup>143</sup> The site is behind a factory and the narrow dirt road is peppered with rotting garbage. To the right is the Drina River surrounded by lush

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<sup>143</sup> On findings from the Kozluk mass grave's original exhumation in 1999, see Manning 2000 and Sarkin et al. 2014. In 2015, a new mass grave containing another 56 victims was discovered and subsequently exhumed at the Kozluk site. See Džidić 2015c.

scenery and where Serbia sits just few hundred feet away. To the left is a field of tangled bushes and wild flowers that served as the execution site, where on a single day for ten minutes those who survive the dead are allowed access to commemorate them.



Figure 2.1: Single blank tombstone near the center of the Srebrenica Memorial's entrance (to the immediate right of the lamppost), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

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“Location. Location. Location,” is a famous refrain attributed to the British real estate magnate, Lord Harold Samuel.<sup>144</sup> The point is simple: the “where” something is situated matters. The “where” in the local context also represents a wider collection of different interests and actors. The land’s worth is connected to what, and who, surrounds, inhabits, and administers it. Its practical utility derived from those who lay claim to and

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<sup>144</sup> Safire 2009.

wrestle control over it. And in the case of ethnic warfare, its symbolic and emotional importance is imbued with additional significance (Figure 2.2).

The tract of land where the Srebrenica Memorial is located remains controversial: it is simultaneously a signal of safety for survivors and a zone of denial for perpetrators. The site sits at the awkward intersection of a besieged community, led by a tenacious group of survivors, who returned to a hostile home to claim their rights. As Young argues, “A monument becomes a point of reference amid other parts of the landscape, one node among others in a topographical matrix that orients the rememberer and creates meaning in both the land and our recollections.”<sup>145</sup>

What does it mean to have a cemetery located on the territory where the dead were slaughtered and which is now governed by those who committed the crime? Where the international community, initially involved but now regrettably detached, bears responsibility for this entire situation? And how does this unpredictable climate politicize the site’s survivors who are tasked with running a memorial that invites controversy?

This chapter is broken down into three sections, the first of which recaps how the Bosnian War erupted and genocide unfolded, as well as why the Memorial was established. In the second part, I argue that the site’s location is emblematic of several challenges directly related to the underlying normative assumptions connected to the site’s efficacy as a reparative transitional justice mechanism. Finally, in part three I trace how the site’s initial significance as a vessel for symbolic memories has become a metaphor of fraught justice given the complex political and visual terrain it occupies.

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<sup>145</sup> Young 1993, 7.

### War, Siege, Genocide and Aftermath

Historically, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) was long considered to be the most ethnically mixed territory in the Western Balkans, with its three dominant ethnic groups (Bosnian Croats, Bośniaks, and Bosnian Serbs) having lived relatively peacefully together for centuries, including under the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires.<sup>146</sup> Inter-ethnic marriages were common and villages often integrated; there was also a long tradition of the different groups celebrating each other's religious holidays and being involved in one another's lives.<sup>147</sup>

Formally christened in 1918 at the end of World War I (WWI) as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Bosnia and the rest of its neighbors were renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1963.<sup>148</sup> The SFRY was a union of six separate socialist republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, each with its own governmental institutions) and two autonomous provinces within Serbia (Kosovo and Vojvodina).<sup>149</sup> Under its then President Josip Broz Tito's (Tito) reign, the Yugoslav supranational identity was promoted to unite the varying

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<sup>146</sup> Toal and Dahlman 2011. One of the earliest ethnographic studies on the Western Balkans was written by Joel Martin Halpern. His first book, *A Serbian Village* (1958), was based on his doctoral fieldwork in what was then considered Yugoslavia. He continued to write studies about the region throughout his career. One short article from 1997 juxtaposes the largely peaceful history of Bosnia, including its economic prosperity in the 1960s, with the war's emphasis on the destruction of cultural heritage and village life. A separate ethnography written in 1975 by William Lockwood centered on economic and cultural life in a Muslim village in Western Bosnia. His study was one of the first to specifically focus on the ethnic identity and customs of this particular group. See Halpern 1997 and Lockwood 1975. For more information on Halpern's archives at the University of Massachusetts, see <http://scua.library.umass.edu/umarmot/halpern-joel/>. Accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>147</sup> Friedman 1996, 178 and Toal and Dahlman 2011.

<sup>148</sup> See the Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. [http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia\\_1963](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia_1963). Accessed February 26, 2018.

<sup>149</sup> Woodward 1995, 31.

ethnic groups together under a common political umbrella.<sup>150</sup> This helped Tito to obscure the larger problem: Bošniaks were considered a religious group but not a national one, as were the Serbs and Croats, leaving open the question about which national group was the “rightful” leader of Bosnia.<sup>151</sup>

The collapse of the SFRY began during the economic crisis of the late 1970s, accelerated due to a variety of internal and international political factors, and climaxed following Tito’s death in 1980.<sup>152</sup> Prior to his death, Tito had already begun the process of decentralizing federal authority to each of the socialist republics.<sup>153</sup> As his influence waned, old hostilities from World War II (WWII) as well as much older contested historical memories long suppressed began to resurface through nationalist sentiment and ethnic agitation promoted by each country’s leaders.<sup>154</sup> Around that time, Serbia began jostling for control of the SFRY.<sup>155</sup> Still, an integrated socio-cultural climate continued to exist within Bosnia up until Serbian and Bosnian Serb ethno-nationalist rhetoric about a Greater Serbia entered the political discourse in the late 1980s/early 1990s.<sup>156</sup>

The Podrinje valley borders Serbia, with the Drina River that runs throughout it creating a natural geographic divide. In some parts, the river is shallow enough to easily swim across while in other areas it abuts against steep mountainous walls. Although the

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<sup>150</sup> Bringa 1995, 27.

<sup>151</sup> Friedman 1996, 161 and Toal and Dahlman 2011, 50.

<sup>152</sup> Woodward 1995, 22.

<sup>153</sup> Toal and Dahlman 2011, 50.

<sup>154</sup> West 1994, 318.

<sup>155</sup> Friedman 1996, 178 and Toal and Dahlman 2011, 53.

<sup>156</sup> “Greater Serbia” refers to an ethno-nationalist interpretation of Serbian history where it would reclaim all lands and territories that were once considered (factually or mythically) a part of the country going as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century (prior to Ottoman rule in the Balkans). The term also includes current lands across what was then Yugoslavia where Serbs resided, including in Bosnia and Kosovo, with the purpose of reuniting all Serbs into one single country (MacDonald 2002, 85 and Woodward 1995, 90, 225). See also Engelberg 1991 and Guzina 2003.

water may separate the two countries physically, this area serves as an artificial barrier separating Serbia. Srebrenica is also considered the jewel of the region, known for its silver mining industry as well as its curative springs (Srebrenica means “place of silver”).

In 1991, Slovenia became the first republic to secede from the SFRY, erupting in a brief ten-day war with Serbia.<sup>157</sup> Croatia followed suit and fought Serbia in a ferocious four-year war.<sup>158</sup> Between February 29 and March 1, 1992, what was then called the Socialist Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina (SRBiH) set out on its own course by hosting its referendum to become an independent country. While the majority of inhabitants in the country at that time were Bošniak and did not want to remain in the Yugoslav political sphere with Serbia its helm, Bosnian Serb residents, nonetheless, opposed the break.<sup>159</sup> The Bosnian War formally began on April 6, 1992, just a single day before the EU recognized the country’s independence, even though intermittent hostilities had already begun in 1991.<sup>160</sup>

Bosnia’s declaration further galvanized Serbian ethno-nationalist rhetoric and hastened the start of a brutal war conducted simultaneously on the ground, in the media, and through public relations. The war was led by Milošević using the JNA as Serbia’s proxy. It was aided by the VRS, with Mladić as its commander and Karadžić as its

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<sup>157</sup> Woodward 1995, 166, 202.

<sup>158</sup> Cigar 1996, 63-64. The 1991-1995 Serbo-Croatian War (one of the former Yugoslavia’s wars of secession also known as the “Croatian War of Independence”) included the Serbian bombing of the ancient Croatian city of Dubrovnik and the leveling of the city of Vukovar, including the abduction and killings of Croatian hospital staff and patients later buried in the infamous mass graves at the Ovčara Farm (Cigar 1996, 74, 76). A lengthy battle over the Krajina, the area of land between the eastern border of Croatia and western border of Serbia included mass expulsions and ethnic cleaning campaigns waged against the civilian populations by both armies (P. Cohen 1996, 35, 74). See ICTY. “Case Information Sheet IT-04-75: Goran Hadžić.”

<sup>159</sup> Woodward 1995, 194-195.

<sup>160</sup> Woodward 1995, 235.



political leader, as well as independent Serb and Bosnian Serb militias.<sup>161</sup> While the international community supported Bosnia's independence on paper, it did not help to defend the integrity of the country's borders from a Serbian invasion.<sup>162</sup> Upon the outbreak of war, the UN declared an arms embargo against Bosnia to prevent the smuggling in of additional weaponry and the conflict's escalation.<sup>163</sup> Instead, the Bosnian government was largely left without any defensive equipment even though the JNA's supplies were located predominantly in Bosnia.<sup>164</sup>

It was in the Podrinje where the VRS and its associated paramilitary groups first began their ethnic cleansing (*etničko čišćenje*) campaigns in the early months of 1992.<sup>165</sup> Tensions between both ethnic groups were already high with outbreaks of violence having steadily increased in the fall of 1991 as Yugoslavia disintegrated. During that time, party bosses of Bosnian Serb villages started organizing war councils while many Bosnian Serb civilians began decamping to Serbia creating panic amongst their neighbors. An entire shadow state structure was created by the SDS in the Podrinje: the

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<sup>161</sup> Toal and Dahlman 2011, 7 and Woodward 1995, 262.

<sup>162</sup> Woodward 1995, 6-7, 11.

<sup>163</sup> Woodward 1995, 263.

<sup>164</sup> Woodward 1995, 26. There were in fact several internal conflicts happening throughout the Bosnian War: the VRS pitted against a coalition between the ABiH and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO); the VRS Bosnian Serbs against the HVO; the HVO against the ABiH; and even the ABiH against a separate group of Muslim troops led by Fikret Abdić in Velika Kladusa in the northeastern part of the country.

<sup>165</sup> Wagner 2008, 27. The "cleaning up" of territories as a way to make them ethnically and/or religiously homogenous for nationalist aims, otherwise known as ethnic cleansing, came to define the brutality of the Bosnian War. However, various iterations of this kind of violence dates back at least a few hundred years. On its uses across the former Yugoslavia, see Carmichael 2002. On a broader snapshot of its historical application, see Bell-Fialkoff 1993. On the UN's definition of the practice, see the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect's webpage, "Ethnic Cleansing." <http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/ethnic-cleansing.html>. Accessed June 19, 2018.

Serb Autonomous Region of *Romanija-Birač*.<sup>166</sup> Precisely because of Srebrenica's relative wealth, many of its Bośniak residents with the means to do so left in early 1992.

Early on, the ABiH mounted a defense against the VRS and the paramilitary groups, initially regaining control of parts of the territory. Between April 1992 and January 1993, the ABiH, led by its commander, Naser Orić, attacked a number of Bosnian Serb villages considered to be “militarized.” These includes Zalazje, Skelani, and most controversially, Kravica, on the Orthodox Christmas holiday (January 7, 1993), resulting in a number of Bosnian Serb civilian casualties. By February 1993, the VRS increased its hold on Srebrenica as the ABiH faltered. The rapidly deteriorating situation led to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 819 declaring Srebrenica as a “safe area” on April 16, 1993—the same day as the weapons embargo went into effect.”<sup>167</sup> Two days later, UNPROFOR's Canadian peacekeeping battalion (Canbat) arrived in Srebrenica and took up residence in the former Battery Factory with the express purpose of demilitarizing the safe area.<sup>168</sup> Their Dutch counterparts began replacing them on March 3, 1994.<sup>169</sup>

The VRS continually attacked Srebrenica's growing population, preventing food, water, electricity, medical supplies, winterization equipment, and international humanitarian convoys into the enclave with the express purpose of starving the refugees

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<sup>166</sup> Suljagić 2017.

<sup>167</sup> UNSC Resolution 824 later extended this categorization to five other cities: Tuzla, Žepa, Bihać, Goražde, and Sarajevo. See United Nations Security Resolutions: S/RES/819 (1993)-6 April 1993 and S/RES/824 (1993).

<sup>168</sup> This industrial plant produced primary cell batteries (designed for one-time use, then discarded) and was part of a larger push by Tito to create a manufacturing zone in the Srebrenica *opština* during the Yugoslav era (NIOD 2002, 53). The site fell into disrepair during the economic crisis, beginning in the 1980s. It also likely sat dormant until Canbat was deployed to Srebrenica on April 18, 1993 in accordance with UNSC Resolution 819.

<sup>169</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 127. The Battery Factory ultimately housed five consecutive battalions: two from Canbat that were subsequently replaced with three deployments of Dutchbat troops (DB1, DB2, and DB3) (NIOD 2002, 7).

to death.<sup>170</sup> The vast majority of them came from the rural villages and hamlets that dot the Podrinje. “This is the biggest death camp in the world,” read one sign at the time.

*Krivaja-95*, the VRS’ final push to take the enclave by force began on July 6, 1995.<sup>171</sup>

On July 11, 1995, the Srebrenica enclave was overrun by the VRS.<sup>172</sup> Approximately 20-25,000 refugees fled into Potočari and gathered in the immediate areas surrounding the peacekeeping compound.<sup>173</sup> Between 5-6,000 refugees, mostly women, some of whom were pregnant, as well as children, were allowed entry into the base; they gathered in what is now the Spomen Soba.<sup>174</sup> The rest were denied access. The refugees inside the Battery Factory were subsequently evicted following strained negotiations between the Dutchbat commander, Thom Karremans, and Mladić on July 11.<sup>175</sup>

Hasan’s father, mother, and brother were among those ordered to leave.

On the morning of July 12 and continuing through July 13, the VRS forcibly separated the tens of thousands Bošniak men, women, and children outside the compound in full view of the 350 Dutchbat peacekeepers on the premises.<sup>176</sup> On the road in front of the compound, the women watched as their men were separated from them, told to throw their possessions and identity cards into a pile that was set upon fire.<sup>177</sup> The men were then marched into the woods or transported to local fields, schools, warehouses, and

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<sup>170</sup> HRW 1995 and Nuhanović 2007, 87.

<sup>171</sup> Suljagić 2017.

<sup>172</sup> Nuhanović 2007, 303-305, 328 and Rohde 1997, 161, 166. According to Nuhanović, only the southern portion of the safe area was controlled by the VRS between July 11 and July 13, 1995. This meant that the rest of the enclave could have been, but was not, saved by UNPROFOR and NATO, thereby proving their direct complicity in the mass killings of thousands of men. See Nuhanović 2007, 318.

<sup>173</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 283; Nuhanović 2007, 409; and Rohde 1997, 163, 183.

<sup>174</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 28 and Nuhanović 2007, 318, 334, 348.

<sup>175</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 31, 42-43. Nuhanović says Karremans and Deputy Commander Robert Franken both acquiesced to Mladić’s demands without any pushback. See Nuhanović 2007, 406.

<sup>176</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 28-29; Nuhanović 2007, 378, 405; and Rohde 1997, 208.

<sup>177</sup> Nuhanović 2007, 399-400, 416 and Rohde 1997, 210.

community centers where they were slaughtered and their bodies dumped in primary mass graves.<sup>178</sup> During these separations, the women and children (including a few men and young boys at the beginning of the ordeal) were forced onto sweltering buses. They were sent to the “free” territory in Tuzla (controlled by the ABiH) via a harrowing journey throughout hostile territory and subject to constant harassment.<sup>179</sup> By midday on July 13, according to Honig and Both, “The Srebrenica enclave was ethnically clean.”<sup>180</sup>

Meanwhile, a separate column of approximately 10-15,000 Bošniak men and boys (and a few women) had fled into the mountains between July 11 and 12, 1995.<sup>181</sup> Despite the cover of the forest, this human column was subjected to constant sniper fire and ambushes; the VRS also used UN vehicles to lure the men of the woods.<sup>182</sup> While a small number of men were able to survive (including some who remained stranded in the mountains for up to two to three months), the VRS captured and murdered several thousand men and boys through July 22.<sup>183</sup> This would later become known as the death march (*marš smrti*). All told, over 8,000 mostly men and boys were massacred, ranging in age from 12 to 75.

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<sup>178</sup> *The Srebrenica: Mapping Genocide* program was produced by YIHR in consultation with educators, trauma specialists, historians, lawyers, and graphic designers. It is an interactive educational tool that blends facts, animated footage, and historical documentation from the UN and ICTY. Available in both Bosnian and English, it enables users to learn about what took place in Srebrenica between July 6 and 19, 1995. Users can click on any particular date and see the progression of events, including military conversations, deportations, and massacres. See <http://www.srebrenica-mappinggenocide.com/en/>. Accessed June 19, 2018.

<sup>179</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 36-37 and Nuhanović 2007, 378, 383.

<sup>180</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 42. See also Nuhanović 2007, 372.

<sup>181</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 49 and Nuhanović 2007, 395. The number of men who escaped into the mountains varies wildly within the literature as well as in the ICTY’s cases. According to one eyewitness source, this number is closer to 12,000.

<sup>182</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 53; Nuhanović 2007, 395-396; and Rohde 1997, 228.

<sup>183</sup> Honig and Both 1996, 4, 9-53. One of my longtime contacts once recounted how he managed to survive thirty-seven days in the mountains during the *marš smrti*.

These killings became the single largest massacre to take place on the European continent since WWII. In addition to the Krstić, Karadžić, and Mladić convictions as well as the Milošević case,<sup>184</sup> the International Court of Justice (ICJ) followed up with its own 2007 ruling regarding Serbia's involvement. While the ICJ held that Serbia was not responsible for actually committing the atrocity, it did find that the country "failed to comply with its obligation of prevention under the Genocide Convention."<sup>185</sup>

When the war ended, over two million people (approximately half of the country's population) were internally displaced and/or had fled abroad. Roughly one hundred thousand were dead.<sup>186</sup> Tens of thousands of women had been raped.<sup>187</sup> Thousands still

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<sup>184</sup> Milošević was indicted for crimes in BiH, Croatia, and Kosovo; the trial ended upon his death on March 11, 2006. A partial listing of the crimes in BiH for which Milošević was indicted included, "The widespread killing of thousands of Bosnian Muslims during and after the takeover of territories within BiH; the killing of thousands of Bosnian Muslims in detention facilities within BiH; and the causing of serious bodily and mental harm to thousands of Bosnian Muslims during their confinement in detention facilities within BiH." See ICTY. "Case Information Sheet IT-02-54: Slobodan Milošević."

<sup>185</sup> The judgment found that, "The Respondent [Serbia] could not have been unaware of the grave risk of genocide once the VRS forces had decided to take possession of the Srebrenica enclave, and that in view of its influence over the events, the Respondent must be held to have had the means of action by which it could seek to prevent genocide, and to have manifestly refrained from employing them." See International Court of Justice (ICJ). "Case Concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro) Judgment of February 26, 2007."

<sup>186</sup> The total number as well as identities of Bosnia's war dead and missing remains an ongoing controversy between the three ethnic groups. The often repeated assertion is approximately 200,000 dead. In 2010, Zwierzchowski and Tabeau, both of whom worked in the Demographic Unit of the ICTY's Office of the Prosecutor, revisited the ICTY's calculations and arrived at an estimated number of 104,732 dead using a "census-based multiple system estimation" (Zwierzchowski and Tabeau 2010). In 2013, Mirsad Tokača's Sarajevo-based organization, the RDC, launched the four volume "Bosnian Book of the Dead" (BBD) in partnership with the HLC. The book details the names (as well as age, gender, ethnicity and profession) of 95,940 people killed during the last war, an ambitious project in the works for many years (Sito-Sucic and Robinson 2013). It was originally envisioned as an online database that would eventually include the names of the dead exhumed from all the mass graves. See the HLC's website, <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=22376&lang=de>. Accessed February 21 2018.

<sup>187</sup> While estimations range from 10,000 to 50,000, recent accounts by the Bosnian federal government put the number closer to 20,000. See Amnesty International 2017 and Džidić 2015b.

remain missing.<sup>188</sup> The entire country was split into two rival entities, the RS (governed by Bosnian Serbs) and the FBiH (governed by Bošniaks and Bosnian Croats). Virtually no village was left unscathed and the demographics of most changed drastically. All that is left of some communities are one or two homes of returnees. Srebrenica's emotional, social, and political landscape remains frayed and many of the community's battles mimic the contemporary challenges facing Bosnian society as a whole.

Denial of the genocide began as soon as the killings commenced and as visual evidence of the mass graves began to circulate. Over the years, the leaders of the RS have continued to deny the massacre, despite overwhelming forensic proof as well as from the ICTY and ICJ judgments. The RS issued three separate reports in 2002, 2004, and 2010 including its own findings about who was responsible, how many men died, what the men's roles were (combatants or civilians), and why they were killed.

The 2002 report caused outrage within the international community although it was released in partnership with the ICTY. Its controversy arose from the RS authorities' determination to prove that the genocide did not take place, despite the authors' access to UN and ICTY evidentiary materials. This version of the report shows clearly the RS' approach with chapter headings such as, "Depressive History of Serbs in Srebrenica: From the Majority to the Minority," "Ethnic Cleansing of Serbs," and "Safe Area: Srebrenica as a Temporary Base of Muslim Attack."<sup>189</sup>

The 2004 report, issued by the RS Commission that was created under pressure from then High Representative Paddy Ashdown, was more consistent with the ICTY's findings

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<sup>188</sup> In 2014, the ICMP's report estimated that 9,000 people still remain missing, although these figures remain politicized. See Sarkin et al. 2014.

<sup>189</sup> Documentation Center for the Republic of Srpska War Crimes Research, Bureau Government of RS for Relation with the ICTY in The Hague 2002.

about the number of civilians massacred, unidentified, and missing, putting the death toll at 7,793.<sup>190</sup> In June 2004, then RS President Dragan Čavić issued a statement revealing that the VRS had breached the Geneva Conventions to the dismay of the wider Bosnian Serb community.<sup>191</sup> An official apology for the genocide was issued by the RS authorities in November 2004.<sup>192</sup> However, in 2010, a newly revised report, overseen by Dodik (then Prime Minister of the RS), lowered the number of dead and missing.<sup>193</sup> These falsified assertions once again enraged the international community. Dodik has continually denied the genocide, including at the July 12, 2010 and 2011 counter-commemorations in Bratunac.<sup>194</sup> In 2018, he rejected the findings from the 2004 report, ushering in a new wave of controversy.<sup>195</sup> Ironically, in 2010 Serbia apologized saying it should have done more to prevent the killings while not outright characterizing them as genocide.<sup>196</sup> Meanwhile, Orić remains a highly polarizing figure for Bošniaks and Bosnian Serbs. In 2003, the ICTY convicted Orić of “failure to discharge his duty as a superior to prevent

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<sup>190</sup> Government of the Republika Srpska 2004.

<sup>191</sup> On the 2004 statement, see BBC News 2004. The Geneva Conventions form the basis of international humanitarian law. They govern the treatment of civilians and former combatants during armed conflict, including those who are wounded during the hostilities as well as captured as prisoners of war on land and from the sea. See the International Committee of the Red Cross. “Geneva Conventions and Commentaries.”

<https://www.icrc.org/en/war-and-law/treaties-customary-law/geneva-conventions>. Accessed July 11, 2018.

<sup>192</sup> Wood 2004.

<sup>193</sup> Balkan Insight 2010a.

<sup>194</sup> Balkan Insight 2010b. One painful example of the top-level denial coming from the RS authorities is the “Srebrenica Historical Project.” This project actively refutes the historical, legal, and scientific facts associated with the genocide, war crimes trials, and DNA analyses. Funded by the RS, the site is run by the known genocide denier, Stephen (Stefan) Karganović, a lawyer educated in the US (Dobbs 2011 and Karganović and Simić 2013). See also Srebrenica Historical Project. <http://www.srebrenica-project.com/>. Accessed February 26, 2018.

<sup>195</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2018.

<sup>196</sup> Reuters 2010.

the murder and cruel treatment of Serb prisoners in Srebrenica.” In 2008, he was acquitted by the ICTY on the grounds of a lack of evidence.<sup>197</sup>

### **Srebrenica as a Space and Place**

Often discussions about the Memorial are subsumed by the broader contemporary conundrum Srebrenica finds itself in as well as the genocide’s historical controversies and traumatic aftermath. However, simply mentioning “Srebrenica” kicks up any number of underlying assumptions about what it represents depending upon the audience. Understanding these different lenses creates an important foundation for decoding the ways that transitional justice’s claims about healing and closure are expressed as well as the diverse and, as I argue throughout this study, often problematic ways that memories are managed at the site. In other words, “Srebrenica” embodies a broad spectrum of contextual meanings and discursive spaces that produces different kinds of specific knowledge as well as broader perspectives about the site.

Space represents how people assert control over actual locations, deriving their political and sociocultural legitimacy from as well as proclaiming physical, historical, and/or mythologized ownership over it, according to Hinton.<sup>198</sup> Spatiality also references more theoretically conceptions of the bonds that unite people across place and time through their particularized memories and experiences, creating what Anderson calls an “imagined community.”<sup>199</sup> The physical places where transitional justice programs take

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<sup>197</sup> On Orić’s original cases at the ICTY, see The Hague Justice Portal. <http://www.haguejusticeportal.net/index.php?id=6029>. Accessed July 2, 2018. Also see ICTY. “Case Information Sheet It-03-38: Naser Orić.”

<sup>198</sup> Hinton 2018, 29.

<sup>199</sup> B. Anderson 1991; Arendt 1964, 262-263; and Hinton 2018.



place, in Hinton's words, where they "land," become the canvases from where individuals and groups make claims.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, Arendt argues that spatiality

relates not so much, and not primarily, to a piece of land as to the space between individuals in a group whose members are bound to, and at the same time separated and protected from, each other by all kinds of relationships, based on a common language, religion, a common history, customs, and laws. Such relationships become spatially manifest insofar as they themselves constitute the space wherein the different members of a group relate to and have intercourse with each other.<sup>201</sup>

I will repeatedly emphasize that the Memorial's physical property is of monumental significance. Yet the site itself is not necessarily the original driver of claims about victimhood, justice, denial, and blame. It is, arguably, a by-product of the multiple ways that Srebrenica is perceived politically, geographically, emotionally, and criminally.<sup>202</sup> Envisioning these different spaces is critical. It has implications for how and what the site communicates, the environment it exists within, and how people relate, interpret, and attach themselves to it. These different frames very much affect the local community as well as impact the researcher's objective and subjective interpretations.

First, Srebrenica is a *metaphoric* space. The place, meaning the town, has become synonymous with the crime of genocide. It is popular for this very sad and horrific reason according to Duraković.<sup>203</sup> The atrocity casts a pallor even though many of the executions took place in nearby villages and neighboring *opštine*. Visitors who come to the Memorial often do not realize that the site is located in Potočari nor do many of them venture into either Potočari or Srebrenica. The town is an international symbol of unspeakable horror that serves as one of the contemporary genocidal tragedies from

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<sup>200</sup> Hinton 2018, 29, 36.

<sup>201</sup> Arendt 1964, 262-263.

<sup>202</sup> See Blotner 2004, 277.

<sup>203</sup> Personal interview Čamil Duraković, then Mayor of Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

which to hang the international post-Holocaust rallying cry of Never Again. It is important to know about the fullness of the war, one longtime Bosnian Serb female activist said, so that Srebrenica represents something that should never be repeated.<sup>204</sup>

Second, it is a *punitive* space from where indictments are pursued and convictions levied—most often the space, not coincidentally, where much of transitional justice is imagined. That kind of legally-oriented justice does not, however, necessarily fulfill what survivors need or want when they have to confront the bleak reality of their destroyed families, homes, and communities. Some will never find their loved ones while they watch perpetrators live openly among them in a country where even prosecutorial decisions as well as the identification of missing persons are politicized.<sup>205</sup>

Third, Srebrenica is a *performative* space. International visitors, be it diplomats, journalists, activists, researchers, practitioners, or tourists come to see, judge, help, gawk, investigate, observe, mourn, and/or exploit Srebrenica as a sort of show or laboratory. On three separate occasions residents have told me they are not crazy bloodthirsty Balkan animals that visitors perceive them to be. Sometimes outsiders' intentions are thoughtful, coming from a place of legitimate interest. Sometimes they are dismissive as though they alone know exactly how to fix things. And sometimes they are just plain clueless.<sup>206</sup>

Fourth, Srebrenica is a *traumatic* space. It is undeniable that most people, including those who were small children during the war, bear psychological scars. This is not

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<sup>204</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, Bosnian Serb activist #1, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016.

<sup>205</sup> Arsenijević 2011; Pajić and Popović 2012; and Wagner 2011 and 2015.

<sup>206</sup> For example, in September 2011, young people from an international NGO decided to don hippie clothes with red clown noses and parade through the streets while locals gazed upon them with indifference. At the same time, residents also perform in their own way often by repeating exactly what outsiders want to hear about the genocide, especially during the summer.

unique to Srebrenica; most of the population across Bosnia, regardless of their ethnic group, has some form of untreated PTSD. For example, for Kerim, a 31 year old who lost his father during the genocide, Srebrenica is represents a broader landscape of pain.<sup>207</sup> Hariz (age 47) told me the town's problems are entrenched in people's minds, having lived with this trauma for over twenty years.<sup>208</sup> Those caught within this state of flux are what Turner refers to as "liminal entities." They are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."<sup>209</sup> In other words, the liminal aspect of the genocide's memory may actually keep survivors suspended in a painful chapter of their lives.

Finally, Srebrenica is an *actual* space where people live. They try to get on with their lives as best they can, regardless to which "side" they belong or identify with. Life is far more complex and nuanced than a cursory reading of the genocide would lead one to believe. Amir Kulagić, a survivor, member of Srebrenica's Municipal Assembly, and longtime activist, explained the genocide is very much alive for its residents and they are still dealing with the consequences, including discrimination.<sup>210</sup> The Memorial is something they must reckon with—somerly, begrudgingly, or defiantly.

### **The Memorial's Origins**

One of the challenges in piecing together the Memorial's history is that there is no single source nor guardian of this information. During my last round of fieldwork, I located several individuals closely involved with its establishment who were previously unknown to me nor cited in earlier studies. In the majority of these cases, they spoke in

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<sup>207</sup> Personal interview, "Kerim," age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>208</sup> Personal interview, "Hariz," age 47, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>209</sup> Turner 1967, 95.

<sup>210</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

an unofficial capacity due to institutional constraints or a simple desire to remain anonymous. Other people closely associated with the site were unable (due to illness) or unwilling to meet.<sup>211</sup>

Much of the original physical documentation and paperwork resides within the OHR's Sarajevo headquarters. Only the legal decisions are published online; the rest, including internal memos, correspondence, and maps, are haphazardly housed in various binders. Some of these documents are faded photocopies while others are folded up and in poor physical condition. The materials' disorganization mirror the confusion and controversies that pervade discussions about the genocide as well as the site.

There is no obvious way to interpret the physical documentation without someone who has specific knowledge to narrate it. My second contact at OHR gave me an hour-long summary of how the Memorial was founded, based heavily on her own involvement over the years. Lengthy explanations were also the exact way that the Memorial's guides had to explain the entire history of Srebrenica to visiting groups prior to the opening of the Dutch Exhibit in 2017.

There is an interesting dichotomy at work here: only well-connected researchers can examine these materials since they are located in a private office of an OHR executive. It is not available to the very constituents it involves nor is it straightforward to find this data online. While the OHR's website does contain links to important decisions about the Memorial, there is no single page that aggregates all of them. Access to these official memories, in the form of digital and physical archival documentation, are restricted by

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<sup>211</sup> In 2016, both Hatidža Mehmedović of the Mothers of Srebrenica as well as Ahmet Kapidžić, the designer of the cemetery, were both seriously ill. Beriz Belkić, the first president of the Memorial's Governing Board, referred me back to Sadik Ahmetović, the current president. I was unable to track down the former mayor of Srebrenica, Abdurahman Malkić.

the same international organization that has largely stepped away from direct involvement in the site's management.

Several scholars with extensive experience on the ground have published analyses of the site, including its symbolic, legal, and ethical challenges as well as the various actors instrumental in its creation.<sup>212</sup> Much of the literature emphasizes the rightful influence of Srebrenica's survivors upon the process—namely their persistence in creating a memorial and cemetery for their dead kin close to their pre-war homes and land. The survivors' return to Srebrenica was also an explicit goal of the OHR in connection with the facilitation of the DPA's Annex 7 ("Refugees and Displaced Persons").<sup>213</sup> These studies also raise thorny issues about the ways the survivors, including the Mothers of Srebrenica as a collective, have leveraged and, at times, wielded their power over the site.

The fight to create the Memorial began in 1996, just a year after the war's end in a highly-charged and often dangerous post-war environment. The initial idea was that the people killed in July 1995 would be buried in the same place.<sup>214</sup> In 1997, the families of the victims decided they wanted to mark the location of Potočari with their presence at least once a year to commemorate the dead. This particular site is where the men were separated from their female kin so it retains an emotional charge. The UN set up its peacekeeping compound here to guard the safe area, signaling to residents that they would be protected in some form. It is thus a site of two traumas—that of familial separation (with many of the women fearing that their male kin would be killed) and of

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<sup>212</sup> See Pollack 2003a; Selimović 2013; Simić 2009; Nettelfield and Wagner 2014; and Wagner 2008, 2010, and 2011.

<sup>213</sup> OHR 1995.

<sup>214</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

international abandonment (as Dutchbat's third battalion (DB3), stood by while the VRS began the deportations).<sup>215</sup>

In 1997, a single bus of fifty people made the journey; in 1998, the numbers increased fivefold. In 1999, fifteen buses went to Potočari, including a mixture of families and what Hasan called VIPs. The purpose of their participation was to garner international media attention in support of the families' goal to have the memorial there. According to Hasan, there was tremendous hostility from the RS authorities and local Bosnian Serbs.

Resistance also came from the international community, including the OHR; UN; US; and the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), none of whom wanted to stir up any troubles after the DPA was signed.<sup>216</sup>

The site's location was not just determined by the survivors; it was also connected to the more gruesome issue of what to do with all the bodies that had been recovered.<sup>217</sup> Up until then, the majority of them were stored in the salt tunnels underneath Tuzla. The Mothers did not want the cemetery to be located in the FBiH and recommendations to have it Kladanj, Tuzla, or in Sarajevo's outskirts were all rejected (the latter two are where many of Srebrenica's survivors still reside).<sup>218</sup>

There was a close partnership between the families and a constellation of international organizations, representatives, and governments involved in creating the

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<sup>215</sup> Nuhanović 2007, 385, 405. The "Women of Srebrenica" published, *Ujedinjeni narodi na srebreničkom stubu srama (The United Nations on the Srebrenica's Pillar of Shame [sic])* which contains 104 eyewitness testimonies gathered from survivors, many of whose families were separated during the deportations. These accounts were subsequently given to the ICTY. See Women of Srebrenica 2007.

<sup>216</sup> Personal interview, Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, August 22, 2011.

<sup>217</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>218</sup> Personal interviews: Hikmet Karčić, Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bośniaks, August 3, 2016; Nedim Jahić, activist, 8 August 2016; and Čamil Duraković, Srebrenica's then mayor, August 26, 2016. See also Wagner 2008, 195.

concept and design for the site. Key individuals in different configurations included Amra Čelebić (formerly with OHR); Ashdown and Wolfgang Petritsch (both OHR);<sup>219</sup> former (US) President Bill Clinton; Thomas Miller (former US Ambassador to Bosnia); Jacques Paul Klein (then Principal Deputy High Representative of OHR); Susan Carnduff (formerly with OSCE); and Charlie Powell (formerly with OHR Srebrenica) as well as representatives from ICMP, SFOR, and the Bosnian Parliament. The American, British, German, and Dutch governments also provided early financing as did a single material reparation of two million Bosnian Convertible Marka (BAM) from the RS.

Over 10,000 petitions from surviving women, with financial support from the ICMP, were collected in support of designating the land in Potočari for the site.<sup>220</sup> In 2000, the families' pressure on the international community and OHR was successful.<sup>221</sup> *Žitno polje*,<sup>222</sup> the field across from the Battery Factory, was established as a memorial to the genocide by then High Representative Petritsch.<sup>223</sup> The practical reality of securing this

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<sup>219</sup> The Dayton Peace Agreement's (DPA) Annex 10, Article 5 ("Agreement on Civilian Implementation of the Peace Settlement") vests OHR with extensive political power and legal oversight. This international control over Bosnia's national issues, also known as the Bonn Powers, includes, "*inter alia*, the imposition of substantial legislation, the amendment of Bosnian legislation, the dismissal of elected government officials, and the annulment of decisions of the Bosnian Constitutional Court" (Banning 2014, 261). See also OHR 1995.

<sup>220</sup> Personals interviews: Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, September 5, 2011; Nura Begović, Women of Srebrenica, August 18, 2011; and Kathryn Bomberger, ICMP, September 6, 2011. For a more extensive analysis of the efforts of the Mothers to secure Potočari as the location of the cemetery, see Simić 2009 and Wagner 2008, 2010, and 2011.

<sup>221</sup> The families lobbied the OHR which was seen as the most influential international organization with the power and resources to meet their demands (Wagner 2008, 195). The Mothers were crucial in this decision having done a survey with 12,500 survivors, 83% of whom wanted the memorial in Potočari. Personal interview, Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, August 15, 2016.

<sup>222</sup> The field where the cemetery is also referred to as *Žitno polje* which translates to corn or grain field. Personal interview, Hajra Ćatić, Women of Srebrenica, August 18, 2011. See also Halimović and Nikolić 2016 and OHR 2001a and OHR 2001b.

<sup>223</sup> Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 41 and OHR 2000.

land was more involved; negotiations had to be conducted with owners of the individual parcels compromising the field (Figure 2.3). In some cases, the owners donated the land while others had to be cajoled or paid.<sup>224</sup> Still, one big question loomed as the death count rose: could this piece of land accommodate them all?

On July 11, 2000, the families, this time on one hundred buses, were finally able to get political support and protective assistance from the UN, SFOR, and the RS authorities. Hasan said they were determined to make the commemoration a big event—the biggest in Bosnia at the time. Petritsch signed a decree to create the Foundation of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial in May 2001 after the Mothers’ unsuccessful bid to register the site in the RS.<sup>225</sup> In 2003, the next High Representative, Ashdown, determined that the Battery Factory would also become part of the memorial complex. These buildings (originally called the Fabrika Akumulatora “AS” A.D. Srebrenica) were formally transferred to the Foundation of the Memorial on March 26, 2003.<sup>226</sup> That same year the Memorial was inaugurated by Clinton.

It was during Ashdown’s tenure that the greatest numbers of activities related to the Memorial were realized.<sup>227</sup> He built close trust with the family associations despite the political manipulation going on behind the scenes. This included helping the then mayor of Srebrenica, Abdurahman Malkić, understand how the process would work given the

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<sup>224</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #2, August 8, 2016.

<sup>225</sup> OHR 2001a and 2001b. Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #2, August 8, 2016.

<sup>226</sup> OHR 2003.

<sup>227</sup> Personal interview, Saliha Džuderija, former Board Member and then Assistant Minister for Human Rights, Bosnia, August 27, 2011.



various international players involved. According to Čelebić, it was at Ashdown's behest that the OHR dedicated the initial ten million dollars to create the site's design plan.<sup>228</sup>

In 2007, then High Representative Christian Schwarz-Schilling terminated the Foundation through the "Decision Enacting the Law on the Center for the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide." The law, which details the site's structure and financing, is highly significant because it states that the Memorial belongs to Bosnia (the state) and not the RS:

Article 4 (Registration): The Memorial Center shall be a legal entity and shall be registered in accordance with the Law on Registration of Legal Entities Established by the Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina ("Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina," Nos. 33/02 and 37/03).<sup>229</sup>

Back in 2011, Hasan told me that one of the smaller yet no less symbolic victories resulting from this decision was that the Memorial would now fly the Bosnian national flag. This was significant, he said, because "the soldiers that perpetrated the genocide had those emblems on their shoulders, the same emblems that are on the RS flag, more or less."<sup>230</sup> Years later, the site retains a unique power above lesser known locations elsewhere in the country due to its special partnership with the international community.

### **Asserting Sovereignty, Authority and Control**

One of the normative premises of the transitional justice paradigm is to support a post-conflict country's progression from a state of devastation to one of democratic equanimity throughout a variety of judicial, structural, reparative, and symbolic reforms and mechanisms, according to Hinton.<sup>231</sup> The processes are usually (but not always) led

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<sup>228</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016. See also Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 41.

<sup>229</sup> OHR 2007.

<sup>230</sup> Personal interview, Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, August 22, 2011.

<sup>231</sup> Hinton 2018, 6.

by international practitioners working with the local population, setting up the dynamic that the former are there to save and/or rescue the latter in some way. The significance of OHR's intervention at the Memorial reveals complications that exists when externally-driven post-conflict reforms stall in environments where there is little national impetus or consensus to voluntarily undertake them. Three issues in particular highlight the problems with conceiving of the Memorial as a reparative transitional justice mechanism that are connected to its controversial location. These include 1) the imbalanced relationship between the international and local communities; 2) the power vacuum created when external intervention declines; 3) and the institutional dysfunction that is a by-product of the politically comprised environment.

International humanitarianism has its roots in the liberal world order where powerful and wealthy democratic countries frame their interventions in conflict-ridden and/or poorer chaotic countries under the twin cloaks of morality and compassion. Humanitarian intervention is as much about the confluence of morality and politics within the international world order from where dominant countries derive their legitimacy as it is about those at whom these efforts are targeted.<sup>232</sup> External involvement, though, only lasts so long as budgets, attention spans, and political priorities change, leaving those on the ground to pick up the pieces. According to Barnett,

Indeed, unlike domestic governance, which often has explicit mechanisms that are intended to protect individuals from unwanted inference and ensure that they have a voice in decisions that affect their lives, humanitarian governance has a severe shortage of such institutional assurances.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Barnett 2012, 487 and Fassin 2013, 38.

<sup>233</sup> Barnett 2012, 487.

The tension between the international community's intense initial attention and growing disinterest in Bosnia as the years accrue affects the Memorial. Because the site was founded through a strong partnership between local and international stakeholders, there was a supposition that it might not succumb to the dysfunction of the Bosnian state. In the beginning this was true given the heavy hand of the international actors following the implementation of the DPA. At the same time, there needed to be political continuity and sustained interest as different High Representatives assumed the helm of the OHR.

On the one hand, external Western involvement at the site sends a clear message to the local authorities that they cannot ride roughshod over the Memorial despite its location. The OHR's oversight at the site offers survivors the veneer of international protection as well as political legitimacy which, in the early days of the Memorial's founding, was essential given the local Bosnian Serb community's hostility towards it.

This paternalistic relationship between the powerful international community and weaker local actors is interwoven throughout the way that the Memorial was founded. Srebrenica's besieged population had long been pleading with the UN to intervene on their behalf, a failure that led to disaster. It was only after Srebrenica fell and the full scale of the carnage came to light, that the OHR and other international donors, including the Netherlands, US and UK, decided to allocate funding for as well as put political pressure on the RS authorities to allow survivors to go back home and bury their dead. Because "we" (meaning America and Western Europe) intervened to help create the site, "we" have paid back some of our debts to the survivors.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> See Hartmann and Vulliamy 2015.

On the other hand, as international influence and political interest in Bosnia continues to wane, a stalemate has set in. For example, OHR's law remains imposed; it still has not been passed by the Bosnian state parliament due to complications from and stalling by the RS government. Until then, the law remains in the budget of the federal government which dictates the Memorial's financial procedures.<sup>235</sup> Two exceptions are the annual visits by dignitaries offering generic pledges of support as well as the tens of thousands of people who attend the commemoration. This is certainly not to discount the significance of the diplomatic visits for they do generate interest in preserving the memory of the genocide under new political administrations.<sup>236</sup> The Dutch stakeholders have also stayed intimately involved at the site. However, one could argue that this is as much for their benefit as it is for the survivors.

The reduction in international political support and specific interest in the site's ongoing management outside of July 11 have created a vacuum for internal politics, stakeholder fiefdoms, and general dysfunction to thrive. As a transitional justice mechanism, this creates a troublesome situation for a site whose founding was predicated upon the international community exerting its political might over a contested geographic location.<sup>237</sup> Merwe argues that these interventions are often muddled because,

This complex mix of competing messages and the range of external targets can easily leave victims as a small powerless group competing for attention. In focusing on the need to shape the social environment, there is a strong danger that the symbolism will outweigh substantive concerns.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Personal interview, Mersed Smajlović, Director, Srebrenica Memorial, August 23, 2016.

<sup>236</sup> Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland, and the UK government are actively involved with the Srebrenica' memorialization. This includes the publication of survivor testimonies, including Hasanović's memoir (2016), as well as the creation of the Remembering Srebrenica charity which promotes local commemorations as well as genocide education and awareness campaigns each July 11. See Remembering Srebrenica. <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/>. Accessed December 31, 2017.

<sup>237</sup> Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 40.

<sup>238</sup> Merwe 2009, 126.

The Memorial is closely tied to refugee return, leading the way for survivors to reclaim the physical landscape. And yet, the DPA legally allows two quarreling entities as well as political ethnic competition to exist within Bosnia.

In turn, another by-product of a normative transitional justice mindset is created, one that that privileges certain stakeholders over others, a situation we can most clearly see in relation to the Memorial's different groups of stakeholders. A small constellation of survivors actively involved in the site, buoyed by the Bošniak political and religious establishment, hold the reigns closely despite the site being a federal institution. There is an entirely justified reason for the Mothers' ferocity in guarding the Memorial given the rampant and persistent genocide denial despite the forensic evidence. If these survivors do not protect the site's and the genocide's memory, who will? Where is civil society, my contact at the ICTY told me, when it comes to preserving the warehouse in Kravica?<sup>239</sup> Srebrenica's vulnerability is further exploited during the election season when the recurring political crisis about the health and efficacy of the Bosnian state reappears.

Frequently the Memorial's story centers on two homogenous groups predicated on an unequal balance of power. By leveraging Bourdieu's notion of the social field as an alternate way of identifying of these actors, we can start to recognize the unspoken parameters they create for as well as wield over the site. Local survivors and international actors dominate the discourse which winds up excluding other stakeholders as well ignores their diversity of perspectives. Thinking of these disparate stakeholders as a distinct social field also reveals underlying practices that have colluded (consciously or otherwise) in creating the Memorial's compromised position. We can identify how these

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<sup>239</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, ICTY, August 4, 2016.

groups sometimes work at cross purposes as well as how smaller sets of domains emerge, all of which impact the site's internal operations and external messages.<sup>240</sup>

In other words, we need to look more closely within the broadest categorizations of the main players, specifically survivors and the international community, to understand how their interactions affect the site. We also need to recognize the impact of other indirect but no less influential actors that also leave their mark. Roughly speaking, there are approximately five broad groups of stakeholders: 1) survivors (including the Memorial's staff); 2) the international community; 3) national political and religious leaders; 4) the local community, including residents of both ethnicities; and 5) the intelligentsia. I am intentionally excluding Srebrenica's diaspora (living outside of Bosnia) from this analysis since they are not, by and large, involved with the site's daily operations on a regular basis. Their involvement with the Memorial tends to occur during the summertime in conjunction with the commemoration.<sup>241</sup>

Most of these five groups have, in some form or another, a role to play, be in terms of decision making, event planning, exhibition design, content development, general promotion, and/or financial support. Some of these groups function in organized or individual opposition to the site. It is the exchanges between these groups that sometimes create additional tensions and complications for the site as a social field. In turn, these interactions wind up influencing and/or reinforcing the identities of each group. For example, there is a cycle of reciprocity between the two core stakeholder groups—survivors and the international community—the former lobbies the latter for financial

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<sup>240</sup> Bourdieu and Terdiman 1987, 808.

<sup>241</sup> However, as Halilovich notes, "What we should be reminded of however is that for the Srebrenica survivors, regardless of where they live today, "Srebrenica is not just a once a year event" but the everyday reality" (2015, 412 and 419).

leverage or political support. The latter puts pressure on the country and the RS, which, in turn, galvanizes the survivors by conferring additional clout upon them. This dynamic, though, is lessening as the years accrue.

At a site dealing with such a complex and often controversial memory, many often conflicting stakeholder groups are to be expected. At the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (Auschwitz-Birkenau), for example, it took approximately seven years for the numerous stakeholders and constituents to agree upon the updated exhibitions and narrative that will be installed beginning in 2018.<sup>242</sup> The international community's attention to the Memorial, as opposed to other equally fraught memorialization initiatives around the country, is connected to Srebrenica being the only "official" genocide according to the ICTY and ICJ rulings.

### *Survivors: The Powerful Minority*

The Memorial is often associated with the genocide's survivors, however, the story of the site's foundation belongs to the Mothers. These women have made a conscious decision to frame their activism through their identities as mothers rather than victims to strengthen their claims and agency within Bosnia's highly misogynist society.<sup>243</sup> In 2011 during successive meetings, each claimed that their association was the primary one responsible for creating the site. The tensions between the heads of three of the four women's associations are still present even if they are not nearly as heated as they once were. They manage to present a united front when they undertake the July 13 excursion as well as during the commemoration.

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<sup>242</sup> Briefing from educational staff during the Auschwitz Jewish Center's Fellowship program I attended during July 2017.

<sup>243</sup> Wagner 2008, 67.

Unfortunately, the more complicated negotiations that took place behind the scenes are overshadowed. This includes the fact that several surviving men, each representing different family associations, were also integral to the process. They include Hasan, Ibran Mustafić, and Sadik Selimović, in addition to Sefket Hafizović, Srebrenica's former mayor, and then *mufti* (now *Grand mufti*) Husein Kavazović on behalf of the Islamic Community (*Islamska Zajednica*). According to my second contact at OHR, there were five NGOs involved with the Memorial, each of which had a single vote.<sup>244</sup>

Two decades on, the Mothers are a powerful force who continue to dominate most discussions about Srebrenica at home and abroad. Together Hasan and the Mothers are essentially in charge of answering questions about the Memorial. Jahić told me he gets above five requests per week from researchers. He said because numerous people refuse to speak, a small circle of people are interviewed about the war and the after-context, including the discourse about Srebrenica and the Memorial.<sup>245</sup> One of Srebrenica's younger survivors I spoke with named Adnan (age 24) said he gives a lot of interviews for that very reason—because he is active in the community and due to the absence of others who are willing to come forward. He does not like doing it because it feels like he is selling his story. When I asked him what kind of queries he wished people would ask him, he said that no one ever bothered to find out how he personally felt.<sup>246</sup>

Squabbles aside, the Memorial's outward-facing appearance is that the Mothers (and Hasan to a lesser degree) represent all of Srebrenica's survivors and that everyone agrees with their decisions. In terms of the prominent survivors' responsibilities at the site, this

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<sup>244</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #2, August 8, 2016.

<sup>245</sup> Personal interview, Nedim Jahić, activist, August 8, 2016.

<sup>246</sup> Personal interview, "Adnan," age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.



is true to a large degree. Survivors assuming leadership at atrocity site memorials when they are founded is not unusual as was the case at other Holocaust concentration and extermination camp memorials at Dachau in Germany and Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland.<sup>247</sup>

The Mothers, as well as other key survivors on the Governing Board and Advisory Working Group, want to retain authority. The Memorial symbolizes their personal tragedies just as much as the Bošniak community's collective trauma. The site legitimizes their voices and experiences, providing them an international platform to ensure the world does not forget Srebrenica. However, what happens when these same people may not have the professional skill set nor emotional bandwidth needed to oversee an international memorial? There is another level of paternalism at work here by even asking that question, including romanticized notions of how atrocity site memorials should operate. Still, if the Mothers remain singularly focused on keeping their particular memories at the forefront of the discourse, it is worth unpacking the kinds of messages the site is promoting (the subject of subsequent chapters).

From the vantage point of site's daily administration, these questions of competence arise when more challenging memorialization issues surface, especially in its representation of the past and the kind of knowledge it produces within a climate marred by genocide denial and competitive victimization. Beyond handling tours, arranging visits, and managing the daily operations, bigger questions about the site's narrative, preservation, and evolution in the next decade linger. These concerns came up frequently during interviews with people involved in the site's creation as well as with civil society

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<sup>247</sup> Personal interview, Nicolas Moll, memorialization expert, August 3, 2016.

activists. There is a general frustration with how the site is run, including its detached relationship to other Bośniak communities also devastated by atrocities as well as the how the Mothers' keep attention focused on Srebrenica's persecution and abandonment. To date no one on the Governing Board nor Advisory Working Group has this kind of expertise outside of intermittent trainings sponsored by the Dutch stakeholders.

***The International Community: The Dutch, the West and the Rest***

The moniker, "the international community," is used so often in Bosnia, one might think it represents something concrete. Realistically, there are numerous actors within this stakeholder group that have been involved with the Memorial at some point in time. These include, but are not limited to, the countries of the US, Britain, and the Netherlands; international agencies, including the OHR, OSCE, and ICMP; as well as other international NGOs, most notably the Dutch-based interfaith group, PAX (formerly Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad IKV) and the Holocaust transit camp memorial, Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork (Kamp Westerbork Memorial Centre/Kamp Westerbork), in the Netherlands.

At the start, these stakeholders' political weight and financial investment made the Memorial possible. For example, the involvement of the US was crystallized by Clinton's attendance at the 2003 opening as well as 2015 commemoration.<sup>248</sup> British involvement was mostly ascribed to a large financial donation, as well the UK-based Imperial War Museum's design support for the original memorial room, the Spomen Soba.

The most complicated international actor is, of course, the Dutch who have been involved with the Memorial since the early days of its founding. Dutchbat is directly

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<sup>248</sup> BBC News 2003 and Hopkins 2015.

interwoven into the Srebrenica tragedy and the subject of numerous studies and lawsuits over the years.<sup>249</sup> These same soldiers heavily influenced the forensic evidence left at the Battery Factory, including amongst other things, the infamous graffiti. Dutch engagement with the site comes through financial support from the government and occasional memorialization expertise from Kamp Westerbork.<sup>250</sup> PAX coordinates the Dutch constituents, including representatives of former Dutchbat soldiers, with Hasan acting as the conduit between them and the Memorial (I take up these issues in a later chapter).

At the macro-level, this external involvement is complicated. At times it comes across as parental, sympathetic, apologetic and/or manipulative. An undercurrent of paternalism runs throughout these interactions, what Barnett characterizes as, “a thin, and often invisible, line between care and control.”<sup>251</sup> However, while the specter of the international community’s sustained involvement with the site lingers, the reality is that the survivor are mostly left alone to deal with political crises and logistical challenges.

### ***Nationalist Political and Religious Leadership***

The Memorial’s location means it is subject to the whims and machinations of the RS authorities as well as the Bošniak political machine. For example, from the beginning of the movement to establish the site, the latter used the language of victimization to shape the national and international discourse about the genocide. In doing so, they were able to steer the discussion away from the bigger controversies about the hand that the Bošniak nationalist political party, the Party for Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*;

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<sup>249</sup> See Footnote 1 for a recap of some court cases dealing with the question of Dutchbat’s criminal liability.

<sup>250</sup> The staff has benefited from on-site trainings by and occasional visits to Kamp Westerbork.

<sup>251</sup> Barnett 2016, 316.

SDA), as well as the ABiH, may have played in Srebrenica's fall.<sup>252</sup> According to Duijzings, SDA was also initially against having the Memorial located at Potočari but eventually came round because of the overwhelming demands of the surviving families.<sup>253</sup> The commemoration's political bent aside, years later the Bošniak political leadership is loosely involved in the site's daily operations although that does not mean the Memorial is entirely free from their interference in its leadership.

To a certain degree, the politicization of the site is a natural outcome of the dysfunctional Bosnian state as well as a recognition of its inimitable position in the country. There are several politicians who sit on the Memorial's Board. Moreover, because the commemoration is attended by thousands, members of Srebrenica's Municipal Assembly, both Bošniaks and Bosnian Serbs, must engage directly with the site since the event engulfs a good portion of the area in the immediate days beforehand.

The Islamic Community played an integral role in the Memorial from the start in keeping with its wartime nationalist orientation; they along with their political counterparts, continue to influence how the memory of Srebrenica is positioned nationally and internationally.<sup>254</sup> After the war, the Islamic Community led the way in redefining Islamic burial practices when faced with the gruesome post-war consequences of recovering disarticulated skeletons and random bones from the mass graves. Every facet of religious law had to be reconsidered in order for the Bošniak community to bury

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<sup>252</sup> Duijzings 2007, 155.

<sup>253</sup> Duijzings 2007, 157-158.

<sup>254</sup> Bougarel 2018, 150. A more nuanced discussion about the origins of Bošniak nationalism, including the politicization of Islam during the last war, is outside the scope of this study. See Bougarel's 2018 book, *Islam and Nationhood in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Surviving Empires*.

thousands of its slain kin, the large majority of whose remains were in pieces.<sup>255</sup> The Islamic Community's involvement with the Memorial's operations predominantly center on the religious service and mass burials (*dženaza*) during the commemoration; participating in diplomatic visits; hosting prayer services for the women on the eleventh of each month; and leading other religious functions occasionally held on-site (e.g., community dinners during Ramadan).

For his part, Grujičić has not directly interfered with the commemoration although he maintains close ties with Dodik, to whom he awarded Srebrenica's highest honorary certificate in 2018.<sup>256</sup> Dodik's political stunts, ethno-nationalist rhetoric, and hate mongering also cannot be ignored. For example, in 2015, he characterized the genocide as "the greatest deception of the 20th century," while in 2018 he declared that all schools in the RS would adopt the same curricula used in Serbia (one that excludes mention of the genocide and the siege of Sarajevo).<sup>257</sup> Other local municipal politicians from both ethnic groups I spoke with referred to the challenges of having to govern a town where people and forces from the outside continually interfere as well. The implications for the Memorial are clear: while the situation may generally appear stable on a daily basis, threats to its existence remain palpable.

### *The Local Community*

There is also a disconnect about how individuals' actual wartime experiences and are portrayed at the Memorial. My informants were frustrated about their voices not being represented at the site as well as how politics influence the decisions undertaken there.

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<sup>255</sup> For a detailed description of the religious shifts in Islamic burial practices in Bosnia, see Wagner 2008, 215-220.

<sup>256</sup> Lakić 2018.

<sup>257</sup> Kovacević 2018. See also Reuters 2017.

That said, it is still a place they can go to find some solace given that 95% of Srebrenica's Bośniak population has some kind of relationship with those who are buried there.<sup>258</sup> Many survivors spoke of Srebrenica as a dying community as well as a town belonging to the dead—something visually apparent when you walk around. The emotional wounds run deep, they told me. For example, Kerim wondered what life would be like if the thousands of dead were still alive.<sup>259</sup> “More people from Srebrenica live elsewhere,” Adnan told me. “It’s a town of dead people; there are more graves than people.”<sup>260</sup>

For local Bosnian Serb residents, discussing anything to do with the Memorial is a far trickier venture. Most people do not want to speak with outsiders, especially foreign researchers and journalists who may very well twist their words, causing further complications for them amongst their neighbors. In the few interviews I was able to secure with activists and younger residents, the topic of the Memorial was entirely off limits. Rather, they emphasized that there was life in the town despite the attendant hardships of living in Eastern Bosnia where resources and jobs are even harder to come by than in the cities.<sup>261</sup> Those holding political positions, including then mayoral candidate, Grujičić, who went on to win the 2016 election, reiterated a familiar stance that wove together strands of genocide denial, their ongoing vilification and victimization, and their pride in defending their land.<sup>262</sup> For example, he remarked that,

Here [in Srebrenica] there is continuity of killing Serbs [from WWII onward], including their animals, yet only 1995 is mentioned as though the rest of 1992

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<sup>258</sup> Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>259</sup> Personal interview, “Kerim,” age 31, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

<sup>260</sup> Personal interview, “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

<sup>261</sup> Personal interviews: name withheld, Bosnian Serb activist #1, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016; name withheld, male, age 22, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016; name withheld, female, age 25, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016.

<sup>262</sup> On the 2016 election, see Hopkins 2016. Personal interview, Mladen Grujičić, then mayoral candidate for Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

doesn't exist. Everyday there was as Serb casualty mainly in front of village homes, usually in and/or on family or Orthodox celebrations.<sup>263</sup>

At the same time, Potočari as a community is often ignored despite its own tumultuous wartime history.<sup>264</sup> Before the war it served as the area's vibrant manufacturing hub. During the war, these same buildings became shelters for refugees flowing into the area. Because the village has one or two small cafes but no real central hub (as opposed to Srebrenica), it is much harder to get a read on how local people feel about living in such close proximity to the Memorial.

The site impacts the lives of Bošniak and Bosnian Serb residents even if their own voices are not reflected. It is either a marker of their suffering that offers a modicum of solace; a place that exists in defiance of an entirely different rendering of events vis-à-vis denial; or a political monument divorced from their individual realities than nonetheless keeps the memory of the genocide at the forefront of their lives. In other words, in between survivors and the international community sits another group of people who play a secondary role at the site—the local community who willingly support, are resigned to, or remained defiant about what takes place there. This kind of tacit acceptance of the Memorial's physical existence, though, does not happen at other equally charged and controversial sites of atrocities in the area that have not been preserved, such as in Kravica and Pilica.

### *The Intelligentsia: Academics, Activists and Artists*

There is one other group of stakeholders that sit just outside the Memorial's social field. Collectively and individually, their voices do play a role in shaping the discourse

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<sup>263</sup> Personal interview, Mladen Grujičić, then mayoral candidate for Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>264</sup> Nuhanović calls attention to the different wartime situations that existed within Srebrenica and Potočari, especially in the immediate days before July 11, 1995. See Nuhanović 2017.

however small. These are local, national and international academics, civil society activists, and artists who have close ties with members of the staff and/or the Advisory Working Group. They generally act independently from one another, most being recruited for support and insight at critical junctures. For example, the Bosnian theater director, Haris Pašović, created the most recent photographic and art installation in the Spomen Soba as well as directed the diplomatic ceremony and artistic presentations held for dignitaries and heads of state during the twentieth anniversary commemoration in 2015. A few international academics and activists have provided substantive support in shaping the stories and narratives featured on some of placards in the exhibitions. Another group of national and international civil society activists have attempted, with varying levels of success, to create supplemental memorialization projects to not only support the Memorial's educational mandate but sometimes to push well beyond it.

The Memorial was originally envisioned as an international institution led by a committee comprised of survivors, politicians, and diplomats. After the site's reformulation into a state foundation, though, one influential but not necessarily qualified committee took charge of all decision-making: a powerful group of survivors on the Advisory Working Group.<sup>265</sup> As time goes on, its management will naturally change as the founding survivors become older. It is unclear who and where the next generation of leadership will come from and if these individuals will mirror how the site is currently run or embrace a different perspective (be it narrower or wider in scope). For example, when I posed a question about whether trained museum experts could join the staff to Sadik Ahmetović, the former Bosnian government Minister of Security and longtime

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<sup>265</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.



president of the Memorial's Governing Board, he only focused on the complications of international people securing work visas in the country.<sup>266</sup> That kind of shortsightedness may have been entirely justified and appropriate when the site was opened in 2001, but it is much less so seventeen years later.

### *Frailty as a State Institution*

To appreciate the conundrum of the site's location, you need to understand the complicated national and local political environment it exists within. Bosnia has no less than fourteen separate governments and a rotating tripartite presidency, a legacy of the DPA. It is this same document that continues to function as the country's constitution in the absence of significant democratic reforms. The federal government and its institutions are constantly undermined by the two stronger and antagonistic entity-level governments largely split along ethnic lines (with minimal coordination across all of them).

Each one has its own set of ministries making any sort of cooperation or integration inherently complicated.<sup>267</sup> Still, it is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that ethnic divisions remain at the heart of these issues. While there is certainly some truth to that, the reality is much messier. Competing political agendas, rampant corruption, hemorrhaging state coffers, and general malfeasance continue to obscure meaningful change and improved economic conditions for the country's roughly four million inhabitants. All political parties in the country actively contribute to this public malaise while politicians reap the benefits behind the scenes.<sup>268</sup> The government remains the single largest employer, resulting in a significant portion of Bosnia's budget that is

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<sup>266</sup> Personal interview, Sadik Ahmetović, President, Governing Board, Srebrenica Memorial, September 9, 2016.

<sup>267</sup> Bieber 2006.

<sup>268</sup> Bieber 2006 and Mujanović 2017a.

devoted to the bloated public sector. It follows that civil service jobs are the most stable and lucrative in the country.

The Memorial reflects this dysfunction. It is a state institution located on federal land inside the Srebrenica *opština* within the RS. As a political body, the site cannot be controlled by the local Srebrenica *opština* or the entity-level RS government. Rather, it remains under the direct control of the Council of Ministers, the executive branch of Bosnia's federal government. The property it spans is also complicated since the site is split into two parts—the cemetery and the Battery Factory—both of which belong to the Bosnian state. The main road running between them, connecting Srebrenica to Bratunac as well as all points west, belongs to the entity. Security for the Memorial is provided by Bosnia's State Investigation and Protection Agency (another federal institution).

Seven people serve on the Memorial's Governing Board. It has been chaired by Ahmetović since at least 2011. As a state institution, two seats are reserved for rotating members of the FBiH and RS (the latter of which has always remained vacant).<sup>269</sup> The rest include one federal government member from the Committee on Human Rights, Children's Rights, Immigration, Youth, Asylum, and Refugees; a representative from MPI; and two members from the Council of Ministers.<sup>270</sup> A separate Advisory Working Group is comprised of approximately seven members from the Srebrenica *opština*. These include Srebrenica's *mufti*; a representative from Srebrenica's local government; and

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<sup>269</sup> Personal interviews: Mersed Smajlović, Director, Srebrenica Memorial, August 23, 2016 and Saliha Džuderija, former Board Member and then Assistant Minister for Human Rights, Bosnia, August 27, 2011.

<sup>270</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and Justice. Sektor za ljudska prava, Broj: 07-2-50-2051-1/12, Sarajevo, 8.6.2012 godine (Number 07-2-50-2051-1/12. Sarajevo, June 8, 2012). See [http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/default.aspx?langTag=bs-BA&template\\_id=127&pageIndex=1](http://www.mhrr.gov.ba/default.aspx?langTag=bs-BA&template_id=127&pageIndex=1). Accessed March 28, 2018.

several associations of families, including the three groups of Mothers. Many of these same people also serve on the commemoration's steering committee. Hasan is considered a consultant; he is neither a member of the board nor Advisory Working Group.

### *Secession*

In a country where the DPA created two antagonistic territorial entities that collude in weakening the federal state's authority, the Bosnian state often seems stuck in a perpetual state of transition and instability. This political and institutional unsteadiness reveals a complicated undercurrent within the transitional justice project undertaken in the country. Dodik's ongoing threats for the RS to secede from the Bosnian state are carefully orchestrated political intrigues that serve to protect his power when it is politically expedient to do so. RS secession referendums have also intensified during past election seasons when the rhetoric of denial and competitive victimhood peak.<sup>271</sup> These thinly veiled attempts present a more dangerous and pressing threat to the state.<sup>272</sup> If Bosnia's federal structure breaks down, there is a likely chance that war would erupt as Bosnia collapses into chaos.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> During the 2016 elections, Dodik came to a SNSD political rally scheduled in Srebrenica's *Dom kulture* on September 3rd. It was apparent that many of the attendees had been brought in from other areas, having watched the buses arrive to the center of town throughout the day. The rally began with crowd singing the RS national anthem, *Moja Republika*, and included several posters featuring the faces of Dodik and Vladimir Putin. After the local candidates up for election were presented, including a minor speech by then Bosnian Serb mayoral candidate, Grujičić, Dodik took the floor. The centerpiece of his address focused on the unrecognized victimization of Serbs at Jasenovac and how the election of a Serb mayor in Srebrenica would go a long way in reclaiming their rightful place in the region.

<sup>272</sup> BBC News 2016; Mujanović 2016; and Kovacević 2017. In 2016, Dodik challenged the legitimacy of the Bosnian court system when the latter ruled that a proposed holiday to celebrate the foundation of the RS entity on January 9 was unconstitutional. He then held a separate referendum about the creation of this statehood holiday which received seventy percent of the vote in the RS. As of 2017, Dodik put the original referendum about the constitutional court on hold. On challenging the legitimacy of Bosnia's judicial institutions, see Dodik 2017. On the RS holiday referendum, see OHR 2016.

<sup>273</sup> Ghitis 2018; Knezevic 2018; and Tamkin 2018.

Every time these threats occur, the Memorial's physical existence is theoretically called into question—even if no one from either community is willing to acknowledge this outright. We are dealing with a site that is a state institution dedicated to the memory of the genocide inside the Bosnian-Serb dominated entity of the RS. The long-term stability of the site's location should not be easily dismissed, benign though these secession referendums may be. As a monument that sits at the nexus of where the genocide began, it makes sense that it would have a complicated relationship to and with the local community, which includes unpunished perpetrators. Still, this site spotlights the quagmire of Bosnia's political morass of whom both the international community and the country's politicians are responsible. The 2007 OHR law set out to change the agreed upon borders negotiated in the DPA by declaring the Memorial's land to be under the jurisdiction of the federal government rather than the entity to which it was assigned.<sup>274</sup>

The site embodies the highly fraught intersection of conflicting interests at the *opština*, entity, state, and international levels, an unanticipated by-product of the mixed temporal messages of the state building project in Bosnia. For example, Nagy notes that, “Transitional justice also implies a fixed interregnum period with a distinct end; it bridges a violent or repressive past and a peaceful, democratic future.”<sup>275</sup> Twenty-three years since the war's end, it is legitimate to ask whether Bosnia has completed its transition. Is this the reality that was envisioned all those years ago? And how could this imagined peaceful future actually manifest given the gap between international expectations and local realities?

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<sup>274</sup> Simić 2009, 299.

<sup>275</sup> Nagy 2008, 280.

These are the nuances that get overlooked when we solely focus transitional justice through the lens of criminal trials, refugee return, and institutional reforms that, at least on paper, show that the country is taking baby steps towards EU candidacy. As the international community steps back from Srebrenica, local stakeholders have taken more control in determining how they want to engage with and make demands from them. The Memorial becomes a site of contestation of a different sort, one that is not directly connected to the mnemonic battles between the genocide's victims and perpetrators.<sup>276</sup>

It is true that the Memorial is undoubtedly internationally recognized, serving as the focal point for the commemoration. However, that does not change the local political and social context it exists within, fueled, in part, by externally-imposed rule of law reforms that have gone awry. These issues are evocative of the interstitial networks that are generated by transitional justice mechanisms. Hinton argues that these reactions reflect multiple combustible and unpredictable points that occur outside of more structured top-down and bottom-up approaches.<sup>277</sup>

These problematic dynamics are exacerbated by the RS' calls for secession that have spread to similar assertions being made by the politicians of the other two ethnic groups.<sup>278</sup> The ratcheting up of these divisions also reveals the dwindling influence that the OHR (as the proxy for the UN and the international community), has within the country as it looks to close down its operations in the near future. This is another example of how narrow calendars can inadvertently do more harm than good in environments that require a far greater investment of time and resources to work through complex problems.

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<sup>276</sup> Hinton 2018, 27. See also Subotić 2009.

<sup>277</sup> Hinton 2018, 27.

<sup>278</sup> OHR 2018.

The current High Representative, Valentine Inzko, underscored this issue in his 2018 report to the UN Secretary-General:

Despite ongoing challenges to the rule of law and the GFAP [General Framework Agreement for Peace] during the reporting period, I have continued to refrain from using my executive powers, in accordance with the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board's policy emphasizing "local ownership" over international decision-making.<sup>279</sup>

OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger echoed similar concerns:

It is important to note the country's progress in the past decade, including implementation of the reform agenda. However, I am very worried about the current polarized political climate. Negative rhetoric by political leaders undermines what has been achieved so far, slowing down meaningful progress.<sup>280</sup>

Who would then protect the site if Bosnia splits? To raise this flag—what would happen to the Memorial if the RS successfully secedes, effectively stranding Srebrenica—was, for the most part, met with silence, disbelief, and in one case, irritation by the site's stakeholders and local Bośniak politicians. The topic was generally better received in Sarajevo where most interviewees had emotional and/or political distance from the site. One meeting in particular with Ahmetović, himself a survivor of the *marš smrti*, was troubling. He first noted that because the state is still in a transition, it must go through its own catharsis before the Memorial can have a fuller meaning. However, he subsequently dismissed my question about secession, stating that it was not a valid inquiry nor worthy of a response, hastily ending the interview a few minutes later. Kulaglić had a more sobering albeit grimmer outlook. He fears that if the RS secedes, the site will lose its purpose, becoming more of a graveyard with little to no emphasis on the memorialization of and education about the genocide.<sup>281</sup> While the Bośniak community's

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<sup>279</sup> OHR 2018.

<sup>280</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2018.

<sup>281</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

fears about an increase in daily discrimination since Grujičić's election may not have materialized, Srebrenica still has a Bosnian Serb mayor who denies the genocide.<sup>282</sup>

Grujičić and his colleagues did not compromise the 2017 commemoration as had been dreaded (though he did not attend). He did, however, appear at a few Bosnian Serb counter-commemorations and memorial services within the Srebrenica and Bratunac *opštine* in an official capacity. As long as Srebrenica retains a high profile within the RS, nothing can be taken for granted for it also possible that the international community may once again abandon Srebrenica, and by consequence, the site.

### ***Operational Concerns***

Problematic behind-the-scenes issues about operations are also generally left out of the dialogue when conceiving of these sites as reparative transitional justice mechanisms. It appears that some of the political kleptocracy of the Bosnian state has impacted the Memorial's internal operations as well. Despite its unique profile, not much has changed in terms of the site's general management even though the scale of the commemoration has grown exponentially within the last decade.

The Memorial employs twenty-two persons, all of whom are survivors; they are considered Bosnian civil service employees. The staff includes the Managing Director, Director of Visitor Programs, Head Historian/Curator, Translator, and Strategic Consultant (Hasan) as well as other administrative staff members across the legal, tender, museum, and operations departments (ten people in total) and general grounds-keepers

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<sup>282</sup> During a televised interview Grujičić asserted that, "Each victim has their own weight and importance and this must be respected. But I can't agree with the qualification of the crime" (Spaić 2017b).

(twelve people in total).<sup>283</sup> Practically speaking, the bulk of the public-facing work (in terms of educational and diplomatic tours) rests upon the shoulders of four people. True, the property is vast but does it require twelve people to maintain the property when monies not earmarked for the commemoration are scarce?

Concerns about the Memorial's financial and strategic governance were woven throughout my interviews, although they were usually couched within general irritations about what is happening at the site. The Memorial, in this respect acts as both a site of knowledge production (memorializing the genocide) as well as knowledge reduction (discouraging critical thinking about it). Many people understand and/or have opinions about its problematic aspects ("everyone knows this"). However, they cannot or choose not to speak about these issues publically and/or question certain decisions given how fiercely the site's stakeholders protect it. Those that do are condemned—as has happened on several occasions to Emir Suljagić, a survivor, political activist, and former Minister of Education in the Sarajevo canton.<sup>284</sup>

The site's mandate is four-fold: "1) Construct and maintain the Memorial; 2) receive and disburse funds for the Memorial; 3) cooperate with similar centers, foundations, and associations worldwide; and 4) conduct other related activities to the Memorial."<sup>285</sup>

However, the majority of funds the site received in 2016 from the Bosnian federal

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<sup>283</sup> Personal interview, Amra Fazlić-Begić, Director of Tourism, Srebrenica Memorial, August 24, 2016 and Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Izvještaj o Radu za period 01.01.2015 do 31.12.2015 godine (Work Report from the Period of January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015). See [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj\\_o\\_radu\\_MC\\_za\\_2015.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj_o_radu_MC_za_2015.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.

<sup>284</sup> This is a challenging topic for an outsider to dive into because it strikes at the heart of the interplay between possible financial mismanagement, legacies of the communist bureaucracy, and political interference in the site. It was a present theme across conversations throughout my fieldwork. No one was willing to speak on-the-record with me in any capacity about it.

<sup>285</sup> 2014 Srebrenica fundraising outreach brochure. See also OHR 2007.



government (891,000 BAM  $\approx$  \$534,000) went towards general operating expenses (707,000 BAM  $\approx$  \$424,000) and the commemoration (150,000 BAM  $\approx$  \$90,000). This left 33,000 BAM ( $\approx$  \$19,800) for capital expenses which was spent on building the headstones and coffins as well digging the plots and maintaining the graveyard.<sup>286</sup> Beyond expenditures on salaries and administrative expenditures, the site's main focus is on hosting the commemoration. This leaves virtually nothing left to address the structural issues plaguing the rest of the Battery Factory complex.

The Memorial receives approximately 120,000 national and international visitors a year, including the thousands who attend the commemoration.<sup>287</sup> Given that the four core parts of the site (the cemetery, the Spomen Soba, the Sense Center, and the new Dutch-financed exhibit) are spread out far from each other, why is there not even a printed map or signage directing visitors? Another question concerns the lack of information booklets and original research commissioned by the site's staff or associated consultants.<sup>288</sup>

This is not a myopic discussion about creating materials to sell nor making signs. Rather, these issues refer to the question about the Memorial's output and priorities since it was founded. Is perhaps something else afoot? Namely, the site offers steady jobs in a

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<sup>286</sup> In 2016, the Dutch also donated another 109,000 BAM ( $\approx$  \$65,000) that went towards handling human remains as well as creating the headstones. That same year, they also donated 4 million BAM ( $\approx$  \$2.4 million) to create the Dutch Exhibit: 3 million KM ( $\approx$  \$1.8 million) went towards the building renovations and 1,140,000 BAM ( $\approx$  \$683,000) was used to create the installation. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. *Obrazloženje Godišnji izvještaja o izvršenju budžeta za period 01.01-31.12.16 godine* (Annual Report for the Budget Breakdown for the period of January 1 to December, 31, 2016). (No longer available on the website).

<sup>287</sup> Personal interview, Mersed Smajlović, Director, Srebrenica Memorial, August 23, 2016.

<sup>288</sup> The tiny shed operating as the Memorial's unofficial flower and gift shop that sits at the outside edge of the site's property is run by Fadila Efendić; her daughter owns it. Efendić lost both her husband and son in the genocide, and sells, amongst other items, a range of locally-published memoirs by survivors as well as DVDs. Efendić is one of several prominent survivors and is regularly interviewed by local and international journalists and researchers. See S. Anderson 2014. For more information on Efendić's story, see *Remembering Srebrenica*. <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/survivor-stories/fadila-efendic/>. Accessed February 4, 2018.

country where full-time employment is scarce.<sup>289</sup> These are both examples of interstitial “sideways” interactions that happens when a transitional justice mechanism is focused more on its possible meta-level reparative effects for the community rather than engaging with the thornier issues about the business of managing it.<sup>290</sup>

### **Symbolic Inclusion and Exclusion**

There is important knot involving reparations and memories at the Memorial that is worth untangling: separating out issues related to the sovereignty over the site’s physical territory from the symbolic and painful associations attached to it. Although the Memorial belongs to the federal government on paper, in reality it remains a thorn in the side of the RS authorities.<sup>291</sup> Moreover, while Srebrenica is one of the physically safer towns in Bosnia, ethnic discrimination and intimidation do occur—even if things appear calm on the surface.<sup>292</sup> The weight of the crime fills the atmosphere, hanging over Srebrenica, Potočari, and the numerous villages that comprise the *opština*. Complicity and denial intermingle with grief and devastation, all of which bear down even further on the site’s significance. From this vantage point, the Memorial as a site of social repair across ethnic lines appears disconnected from the local community’s lived realities.

One of the positive consequences of Mothers’ efforts was that the site became a reason for survivors to return to their pre-war land, also one of the overarching goals of transitional justice programs as well as OHR’s facilitation of the DPA’s Annex 7.<sup>293</sup> This

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<sup>289</sup> Personal interviews: Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016 and Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

<sup>290</sup> Hinton 2018, 26.

<sup>291</sup> Simić 2009, 296.

<sup>292</sup> I have witnessed this personally over the years and it was confirmed by nearly everyone I know in Srebrenica. Crime does occasionally occur although the motives may not always be ethnically motivated.

<sup>293</sup> OHR 1995 and Pollack 2003a, 194.

symbolic practice of return was their way of reversing ownership of the land from which they were ethnically cleansed.<sup>294</sup> Pollack links the voluntary return of Srebrenica's expelled Bošniaks to a mythologized connection between their heritage and land, believing it had always been Bošniak and should now be reclaimed.<sup>295</sup> An atrocity site memorial's location speaks volumes about the metaphorical presence of the dead even in their physical absence. Wollaston argues

Survivors (or the community as a whole) hope to etch the memory of events into the landscape, thereby forcing it to bear witness so that either a trace of what took place remains, or that there is a memorial counter-assertion that what was destroyed is not forgotten.<sup>296</sup>

In the case of Srebrenica, the ties between the living, the dead, and their Muslim homeland (whether imagined or real) play a big part in why survivors wanted to bury their dead at Potočari.<sup>297</sup> Thus, from the onset of its designation as a memorial, the site signaled to survivors that it was safe to go back even though early commemorations were met with violence and hostility from neighboring Bosnian Serbs.<sup>298</sup> Hasan, though, disagrees with the connection between refugee return and the site. "We can have a memorial," he said, "without even one living Bošniak in Srebrenica. These two things may be connected, but at the same time they don't have to be."<sup>299</sup>

For many Bošniaks, it is still a huge problem that Srebrenica, and by extension, the site, is located in the RS.<sup>300</sup> Over the years the returnees launched a series of ultimately unsuccessful protests for Srebrenica to receive special designation within the country so it

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<sup>294</sup> Duijzings 2007, 153; Toal and Dahlman 2011, 10; and Wagner 2010, 65.

<sup>295</sup> Pollack 2003a, 196 and 2003c, 800. See also Simić 2009, 296.

<sup>296</sup> Wollaston 1996, 37.

<sup>297</sup> Pollack 2003a, 193 and Simić 2009, 298.

<sup>298</sup> Personal interview Ćamil Duraković, then Mayor of Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

<sup>299</sup> Personal interview, Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, August 22, 2011.

<sup>300</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

would not officially remain a part of that entity.<sup>301</sup> The road that separates the cemetery from the Battery Factory complex serves as the central link between Srebrenica and all points west. This includes the now Bosnian-Serb dominated *opština* of Bratunac, itself the site of vicious ethnic cleansing and Mladić's wartime base. It is nearly impossible to travel to and from Srebrenica without passing by the Memorial. The local Bosnian Serb community was not included in the decision-making process to create the site; rather, it was imposed upon them by the OHR's 2007 law. Thus, for many, the site serves as a continual symbol of their vilification.<sup>302</sup>

There can be no mistake: the Memorial is an anomaly. It is tolerated by the RS authorities and an unknown number of Bosnian Serb residents because they have been forced to do so. The genocide, though, occurred at different sites throughout the area. Many of them are fiercely guarded by local villagers who have opposed the erection of nearly all monuments to Bošniak deaths.<sup>303</sup> The physical traces of the murders are fast disappearing.<sup>304</sup> For example, the primary schools in Orahovac and Petkovci are back in use (Figure 2.4). The ceiling in Pilica's *Dom kulture* is in an advanced state of collapse (Figure 2.5).<sup>305</sup> The foliage growing over the site of the exhumed mass grave in Kozluk is waist-high and surrounded by rotting garbage (Figure 2.6). Tall sunflower stalks cover

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<sup>301</sup> A discussion about the protests is outside this study's scope. See Nettelfield and Wagner 2014.

<sup>302</sup> Simić 2009, 298.

<sup>303</sup> The exception is a small plaque near the football field in Nova Kasaba.

<sup>304</sup> These disparate execution sites are dwarfed in number by the abundant former mass grave exhumation sites that are strewn throughout the region that temporarily marked once a year during the *marš mira*.

<sup>305</sup> For example, in 2016, fresh Bosnian Serb nationalist graffiti in Pilica's *Dom kulture* was discovered. It included the Serbian cross and other slogans bearing Mladić and Milošević's names. These markings were deliberately scrawled on the deteriorating walls covered in peeling paint, mud, and scant forensic traces of the victims' blood to instill fear in the mourners. Immediately outside sits a newly repainted counter-memorial to fallen Bosnian Serb soldiers during the last war as well as WWII. See also Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 68-69.

the former military farm in Branjevo while the warehouses of Kravica contain animal husbandry and rusting machinery. It took several years of negotiations with the local authorities to set foot on the property of another infamous and unmarked site, the *bijela kuća* that sits on the side edge of the cemetery's property (Figure 2.7).<sup>306</sup>

For the RS authorities, any public attack against the caravan of Mothers on July 13 would incur unwanted international ire. This mission is not just about marking these particular spaces, but also reclaiming these sites through their presence.<sup>307</sup> In this case, Bošniak survivors, led by the Mothers, leverage their collective influence through the use of their bodies to keep the memory of the genocide alive within an atmosphere intensely bent on denying it. The lack of preservation of these execution sites reinforces the significance and bravado of the Memorial: a site to the dead inside the territory founded by their killers. Survivors often say that the RS was carved out of their blood based on the ferocious ethnic cleansing campaigns they endured beginning in the spring of 1992. It is a memorial located on reclaimed Muslim land. Its existence is a statement. Even placing the sample white tombstone inside the cemetery back in 2002 was an enormous symbolic and emotional milestone, according to Čelebić.<sup>308</sup> It was one signal that pushed back on the other visible indicators of exclusion that abound.

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<sup>306</sup> The house is inhabited by a family, judging from the laundry and signs of life that can be seen from behind its large gate. From the highway, this house is easily missed, especially in the summertime when the tall husks of corn and other vegetation virtually obscure it from view. It was inside this house and the adjacent property where the VRS tortured and killed some of the men. Several interviewees told me of the horrific sounds emanating from it that echoed for miles. One young man recounted a story of a very young girl who went crazy, having been subjected to these inhumane screeches on the night of July 11, 1995. To this day, he told me, she no longer speaks, having sustained permanent mental damage.

<sup>307</sup> Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 61-71 and Simić 2008.

<sup>308</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

### *Visual Boundaries*

There are a universe of graphic cues and symbols that communicate a broader ethno-nationalized ideology of separation and supremacy which permeate the RS' geographic landscape. This is not to say that every person, village, or community in the entity is hostile to outsiders, e.g., non-Serbs. Hinton argues that transitional justice's aesthetics telegraph different kinds of messages.<sup>309</sup> While he is referring more to the gestalt of the specific programs, for example, the courtroom design, judicial dress, and visitor signage associated with criminal trials, I contend that the prevalence of RS insignia highlights one of the paradoxes inherent in often ill-designed transitional justice initiatives in Bosnia.

The DPA enshrined ethnic identity as a sanctioned political platform (e.g., the creation of the two entities and the tripartite presidency) even though the OHR's mandate is "to ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina evolves into a peaceful and viable democracy on course for integration in Euro-Atlantic institutions."<sup>310</sup> Unlike school segregation and discrimination which violate the national constitution, the RS, as well as its insignia, were legitimized. And yet, for survivors they remain the symbols of the perpetrators.

These visual markers are important in understanding the contested climate in which the Memorial exists. For example, "Welcome to Republic of Srpska" signs demarcate what appear to be arbitrary borders since they are not accompanied by an official checkpoints. There are flags attached to street posts adorned in the colors and insignia of the RS. There is a predominance of Cyrillic letters on many street signs, village signposts, and storefronts with their Latin counterparts nowhere to be found.<sup>311</sup> The name

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<sup>309</sup> Hinton 2018, 29.

<sup>310</sup> OHR. "General Information." <http://www.ohr.int/?lang=en>. Accessed June 5, 2018.

<sup>311</sup> The Bosnian language is written in Cyrillic and Latin characters. In the FBiH, both are used.

of a remote village on a sign in the mountains was made nearly illegible to prevent anyone from finding it since a well-known perpetrator is rumored to be living there.<sup>312</sup>

While passing through Bratunac en route to Srebrenica, there are posters of Vladimir Putin plastered on building walls, bus shelters, windows, and light posts, including the one in front of Srebrenica's police station, itself flying the RS flag (Figure 2.8). The deployment of these posters works on two levels. These images communicate to likeminded citizens that the RS has a powerful political ally who serves as a counter to Western democratic interference in Bosnia which emphasizes Bosnian Serb denigration. However, the posters also serve as a form of intimidation to Bośniaks (and other outsiders) since Putin's reputation for gross human rights violations is well-known and that, in the case of Srebrenica, he is aligned with Bosnian Serbs.<sup>313</sup>

Other visual and architectural provocations have encroached upon the property surrounding the Memorial in past years by both sides. In 2010, two large banners appeared, one stating, "Serbia is Responsible for the Genocide/Srbija je odgovorna za genocid" and a separate one referring to Serbia's "aggression" against Bosnia were hung at the far end of the cemetery on private property (Figures 2.9 & 2.10).<sup>314</sup> Another controversial structure is situated above the cemetery's upper perimeter in the village of

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<sup>312</sup> In 2011, a young male survivor gave me a tour of the mountain villages he remembered from his childhood as well as during the war. He made a point of stopping near this particular sign to emphasize that the village name had intentionally been covered up. He was one of the lucky young boys—he successfully escaped with his mother on a bus due to his slight frame and emaciated body. He would later talk about the nightmares he continually has because he survived while countless others of his friends did not.

<sup>313</sup> In 2015, three days before the twentieth anniversary commemoration, Russia vetoed a UNSC resolution to recognize the mass killings in July 1995 as a genocide. See Reuters 2015 and Standish 2015.

<sup>314</sup> This was local commentary about the ICJ's 2007 ruling and subsequent dismissal of the 2016 appeal. The timing of this signage's appearance could not have been clearer as on July 22, 2010 the ICJ issued its advisory opinion stating that Kosovo did not violate international law by declaring its independence from Serbia. See ICJ 2007, 2010, and 2017.

Budak: a Serbian Orthodox Church built in 2013. During one television interview, a small wooden sign is visible nearby.<sup>315</sup> It shows a Serbian cross with the four c's (loosely translating as "Only unity saves the Serbs") that has long served as a Bosnian Serb nationalist symbol. Encountering this mark in Bosnia, much less one within eyeshot of the Memorial, is something akin to seeing a swastika.

### Images



Figure 2.2: The center of town, Srebrenica, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

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<sup>315</sup> AFP 2013 and Jukić 2013.





Figure 2.3: Partial map showing plots of land that needed to be secured in order to allocate *Žitno polje* for the cemetery, 2016. Map provided by OHR.



Figure 2.4: School in Petkovci, one of the Srebrenica genocide's execution sites, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 2.5: The former *Dom* culture in Pilica, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 2.6: Road filled with trash where the Kozluk mass grave is located, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 2.7: Hatidža Mehmedović being interviewed in front of the *bijela kuća*, July 13, 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 2.8: Poster of Vladimir Putin with Srebrenica's police station in the background, August 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 2.9: Protest banner outside the Srebrenica Memorial, July 2010. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 2.10: Protest banners hung on the back border of the Srebrenica Memorial's property condemning the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) as genocidal for recognizing the RS, 2010. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

## Chapter 3: The Cemetery—Private Reflection, Public Controversy

Between the fear that something would happen and the hope that still it wouldn't,  
there is much more space than one thinks.  
On that narrow, hard, bare and dark space a lot of us spend their lives.

—Ivo Andrić  
*The Bridge on the Drina*

### **The Dead Come Home**

“These are my roses, I plucked them from around my house and brought it to my child. My home, my Srebrenica. There is my home.”

“R” utters these words while crouching at the base of her son’s grave. He was born in 1973, representative of a generation of Bošniak men that are dead. I first met R after the monthly prayer service held at the Memorial on the eleventh of every month. She was amongst a small group of women who had congregated to offer each other mutual support. These meetings form a broader group of monthly protests, also on the eleventh, which the Mothers stage in the center of Tuzla and outside Sarajevo. Together, they stand together united in their grief yet equally resolved to keep up the fight for justice. Many of their loved ones’ remains have still not been recovered after all these years.

Some women hold large posters showing pictures of the dead while others clutch small hand sewn cloth squares featuring the names and birthdates of their kin. Hundreds of these panels have been patched together in massive quilts that are hung during milestone commemorations, such as during the 15th and 20th anniversaries (Figure 3.1). Together they communicate the shattering scope of those killed during the genocide. Through them, the women speak individually and collectively through the visual form of quilting, part of the cultural tradition here, especially in Bosnia’s more rural areas.

After the service ends, many of the women seek cover from the blazing sun near the *musala*. Well over twenty years later, these women not only have to contend with their grief. They are also constantly fielding interview requests, although most researchers inevitably speak with the heads of these organizations or other equally prominent women

whose stories are widely known. R approaches, wanting to tell us her story. As we wander through the cemetery together, she points out her son and the rest of her kin.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

Sixteen taps in total, one on each of her family's tombstones clustered closely together. Through these gentle touches and sounds, she expresses her emotional connections to them while momentarily bringing each one back to life. It is one thing to read aloud the identities of the dead, organized by common last names on the stone plaques located near the cemetery's entrance. It is quite another to trail a survivor around seeing how much damage the genocide wrought over a single household. R's physical and emotional pain is crushing to witness. But, she is a resilient older woman, her youthful spirit shining through her fiery expressions of anger about the hardships she has been forced to shoulder in this lifetime.

She slides two fingers across her neck while explaining that her husband and brother-in-law were murdered in 1976, then points over the hills to indicate where the killer lived. Her life was very difficult as a young widow with several children living in then Yugoslavia. Here in the cemetery, thirty-five years later, she breathlessly recounts the identities of her slain offspring and kin. Four of her children—dead. Her father-in-law—dead. Her mother-in-law—missing. Her youngest brother-in-law, the son of her brother-in-law, her oldest brother-in-law and his father, and her son-in-law—they are all dead.

“My only brother, there he is.”

It is difficult to keep track of the extended kinship connections uniting R's family. She last saw her eldest son on July 13, 1995, in front of the warehouse in Kravica as she



was forcibly bused out of the enclave. Their convoy stopped long enough for the captured men to run across the road in front of them.

“Starving, thirsty, without one shoe. I do not know. It is hard for me to talk.”

A son and daughter will survive. One of her granddaughters is born in 1995, the same year the child’s father disappeared. Beneath our feet lie wooden caskets containing plastic bags of whatever mortal remains were recovered in the mass graves exhumed throughout the area. DNA samples from these bone fragments were used to identify the dead so that their names could be returned to them. Their tombstones are joined by thousands of others. In the distant background stretching out in every direction are countless forests dotting the mountainous landscape. The juxtaposition of this natural beauty and human devastation is overwhelming.

There is an unspoken connection between my translator, who was eleven when Srebrenica fell, and R. For the hour, he has become her surrogate son. At some point, they become engaged in a deep conversation that he does not translate. The intensity of R’s hand gestures and loud voice belie her intense frustration. R buried her family members during different commemorations, depending entirely upon when they were identified. She has had to endure this ritual sixteen times over the years.

R lives up the hill in Bašta, towards the southern edge of Srebrenica, on a windy dirt road past where the bakery used to be. Her house appears to be in excellent condition, no small feat given that the dwelling next door is in severe disrepair. There were four homes here before the war, she says, but the “Četniks” destroyed them.<sup>316</sup> She returned in 2001,

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<sup>316</sup> Četnik in this context is a slur for Bosnian Serbs. The term has lengthy history heavily intertwined with the Partisan movement in Yugoslavia during WWII. Marko Attila Hoare’s 2006 book, *Genocide and Resistance in Hitler’s Bosnia*, offers a comprehensive analysis.

mostly because she could not afford to build a new house in the FBiH. Her home here was partially destroyed which took years to rebuild given her meager monthly pension. From this small amount, she must also pay for her food, medicine, and utilities.

R's home has lace curtains adorning the windows and flower pots lining the steps to her front door. The sound of the stream flowing in front of her house adds to its overall tranquility. It is a large piece of property compared to other homes closer to the center of town. But make no mistake: the "Četniks" lived all around here, as she points towards the forest and then back to her throat. There were problems with them when she returned, but they no longer bother her. In fact, she says, some of "her" people are worse than them.

In R's living room hangs the quintessential post-war family photo I have seen in the homes of other survivors. R's family, including all of her children and her husband, are in the frame. From afar, it looks normal—her large brood gathered for a group snapshot. Close up, though, odd details stand out. It is a collage of her family that she pieced together from photos she was somehow able to save during the war. The photo is comprised mostly of close-ups cut out from other pictures. They seem to have been taken during different time periods, judging by the outfits and hairstyles, as well as each image's paper quality. Some are in color while others are in black and white.

But there is something else that takes several minutes to decipher as R names each person. Her oldest son looks the youngest while her youngest son looks the oldest. The only surviving picture of her eldest son killed in the genocide is when he was young. Her husband also hasn't aged because, he too, was murdered albeit a little over four decades ago. And then another level of the tragedy surfaces: this is a photographic medley of the dead and the living.



boundaries. There are also visual (e.g., footpaths and natural features); political (e.g., community ownership); emotional (e.g., personal and collective remembrance); and spiritual markers (e.g., “sacredness”).<sup>318</sup>

War-related cemeteries function on two levels; the scope of loss is conveyed through an imposed design scheme dictating the homogeneity of the tombstones. The deceased are differentiated through engravings of their names and personal details. This kind of commemorative visual language is prevalent in many WWI and WWII cemeteries across Europe as well as dominates the Arlington National Cemetery in the US. This tension between abstraction and individuality also applies to the different ways communities and individuals remember the dead in the wake of massive human rights violations. The cemetery is a natural location where battles over memory, land, and nationhood play out. The controversies about the dead seen from this angle spotlight the tensions between the two or more sets of competing communities involved in the conflict.<sup>319</sup>

What gets overlooked are the internal practices and controversies that happen within a single community when one set of stakeholders dictates how the dead should be immortalized. Srebrenica’s survivors faced steep financial, emotional, and political challenges by going back home. The Memorial may have signaled it was safe to return but the situation remains fraught for many. While the cemetery may offer them some respite, it also highlights challenges related to how the dead are memorialized as well as how justice is interpreted now that the site has been established.

In this chapter, I argue there are mnemonic implications of having a politicized and active cemetery serve as the most important component of an atrocity site memorial,

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<sup>318</sup> Rugg 2000, 272.

<sup>319</sup> Bar-Tal 2003, 89.

especially one largely conceived out of a post-conflict reconstruction program. The international community carved out an antagonistic space for the Memorial inside the RS. The temporal emphasis on the genocide obscures nearly everything that happened in Srebrenica beforehand, something that determines who exactly is buried in the cemetery. I also describe how the Memorial's stakeholders represent, venerate, and weaponize the bodies of the dead as both victims and martyrs to shape perceptions about the genocide's memory as well as interpretations about post-war justice.

### **The Cemetery's Design**

Cemeteries containing the remains of people who were massacred, especially en masse, not only serve as locations to bury the dead but also provide proof of the crime. According to Williams, "In places like Argentina, Chile, Cambodia, and the Balkans where death was hidden, graves stand as visible evidence of the scale of the killing."<sup>320</sup> Being able to see the dead inside the graveyard is also intertwined with public and private mourning as individuals and communities reconcile their losses.<sup>321</sup> Brett et al. underscore this point, noting

It is precisely public acknowledgement of private experience that is at the heart of the 'reparative' side of public memorials, and the reason they are often linked to reparations policies—efforts by states to focus on the needs of victims in the aftermath of violence and atrocity.<sup>322</sup>

If an indiscriminate execution site is where these persons were brutally extinguished, it is inside a well-ordered cemetery where a dignified space is created to grieve as well as remember them. A mixture of both the absence and presence of human remains inside the graveyard creates a special memorialization challenge for how to remember those whose

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<sup>320</sup> Williams 2007, 81.

<sup>321</sup> Bickford and Sodaro 2010, 76.

<sup>322</sup> Brett et al. 2007, 6.

remains do not physically reside there. At the Srebrenica Memorial, there are three different levels of commemorative memory-making simultaneously taking place: panels of names (1) are punctuated by markers emphasizing space and time (2) which are juxtaposed against the powerful optical of several thousand identical tombstones (3). Together, they forge a link between the abstract concept of genocide and the material proof of what mass death looks like.

The cemetery or “Sacral Component” is across the highway from the Battery Factory (Figure 3.2).<sup>323</sup> Three Bosnian national flags hover over the entrance as well as are strategically peppered throughout the site (Figure 3.3). They are a clear statement that the Memorial belongs to the Bosnian state deep in the RS where entity-level insignia is plastered everywhere.<sup>324</sup> Despite the neutrality espoused in the Memorial’s mandate, the cemetery is quite clearly an Islamic religious space.<sup>325</sup> The cemetery is dominated by the *musala*, one of the largest open-air Muslim prayer spaces in Europe (Figure 3.4). To the left of the *musala* is the *turbe*, a traditional green-domed Muslim tomb with an engraving from the Quran (154-156 of Surah II) written in Bosnian and Arabic (Figure 3.5).<sup>326</sup>

Three other powerful mnemonic markers are located close to the *musala* that define the genocide’s spatial and temporal boundaries. The first is the commemorative

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<sup>323</sup> I have toured the Memorial extensively as have numerous scholars and journalists (see DiCaprio 2009; Nettelfield and Wagner 2014; Rondić 2015; Simić 2009; and Wagner 2008 and 2010). My insights about the cemetery’s construction and layout are also based on my numerous tours of the Memorial over the years but by no means do I claim any invention.

<sup>324</sup> Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 42.

<sup>325</sup> Quizzically, the Memorial’s director does not see the cemetery as having a religious character since the *musala* is open to everyone and prayers are held on certain occasions. Personal interview, Mersed Smajlović, Director, Srebrenica Memorial, August 23, 2016.

<sup>326</sup> The English translation on the *turbe* reads: “And say not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah: “They are dead!” Nay, they are living, but you perceive (it) not! And we will surely test you with fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives, and crops. But give good tidings to those who patiently preserve, who, when disaster strikes them, say, “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return” (Translation only—Rondić 2015, 36).

“Srebrenica juli 1995” cube weighing over three tons that was the cemetery’s first symbolic architectural feature erected in 2001.<sup>327</sup> This is where diplomats and special groups place flowers (Figure 3.6).<sup>328</sup> The second, “Srebrenica 8,372” (Memorial Stone), is a larger rectangular slab with a jagged top that lists the number of victims and *opštine* they are from (Figure 3.7). The third is an oversized black marble angular fountain with thin films of water cascading down each side into a pool at its base (Figure 3.8).

Behind the *turbe*, *musala*, Memorial Stone, “Srebrenica juli 1995,” and the angular fountain is a massive semi-horizontal remembrance wall arranged in a half circle listing the individual names of each victim in alphabetical order (Figure 3.9). It is apparent from the repetition of last names how the entire male line of many immediate families and extended kinship networks were wiped away in one fell swoop. These panels mimic an international trope featured in a broad range of memorials, including those about the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, and September 11, where each victim’s name is inscribed as a symbolic way to denote scale while personalizing the tragedy.

This tradition of listing all of the dead by name took root after the First World War. Almost half of those who were killed vanished and could not have an actual grave, according to Winter.<sup>329</sup> At the Srebrenica Memorial, a few sheets have been left blank as are empty parcels of land for newly identified victims (Figure 3.10). Laqueur argues that these lists function symbolically, juridically, and commemoratively. On the subject of reburying the remains of the “disappeared” during Argentina’s dirty war but also applicable to the Bosnian context, he argues,

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<sup>327</sup> Duijzings 2007, 158.

<sup>328</sup> Čelebić told me it was an incredibly powerful moment when this first stone was laid. Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>329</sup> Winter 2014, 36.

There is here a move from the intimate and personal (mothers demanding to know what happened to their children, articulated as a demand for a name and a body) to the political (a demand by the victims of wrongs committed by the state for an accounting, for recognition, and for the insertion of this crime into history in such a way as to make it less likely to happen again.<sup>330</sup>

Tucked in between the *turbe* and *musala* is a three-sided vertical marble panel with an inscription about revenge and justice written in Bosnian, English, and Arabic; a copy of it reappears at the property's far right edge. The entrance's visual clutter obscures three more features nearby. First sits a tiny security box containing a chair, desk, and visitor's book. Directly behind it is a small exhibition building; the entryway has a computer allowing visitors to look up the location of gravestones. A few steps down leads to a conference room filled with Tarik Samarah's photographs of the genocide's aftermath, including shots of exhumed skeletons and material artifacts (Figure 3.11).<sup>331</sup> Established in 2003, this was the first exhibition on the property.<sup>332</sup> Outside of it is the plain white tombstone erected in 2002. This small marker was created as a generic placeholder to help the designers and survivors alike envision how the cemetery would look. Even though the official tally of victims (including a full accounting of missing persons

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<sup>330</sup> Laqueur 2015, 432.

<sup>331</sup> Tarik Samarah is a Zagreb-born, Bosnian-raised photographer whose images of Srebrenica have become synonymous with the genocide's aftermath. He is the founder and director of the Galerija 11/07/95 (Gallery 11/07/95) near Sarajevo's famed *Catedrala* in the heart of the city. His photos of Srebrenica form the gallery's permanent exhibition. A large black banner saying "Srebrenica Gallery" is hung on the building's exterior and during the warmer months, a street-level sign is also placed in the square. Interestingly, in 2016 the Museum of Crimes against Humanity opened up on the same block led in part by Jasmin Mesković, President of the Association of Detainees. Galerija 11/07/95 charges a fee for entry and sells a variety of small photography books and postcards from previous exhibitions. More problematic are the t-shirts bearing the "United Nothing" graffiti from the Battery Factory. According to its website, "Gallery 11/07/95 is the first memorial museum/gallery in Bosnia and Herzegovina—an exhibition space aiming to preserve the memory on Srebrenica tragedy and 8,372 persons who tragically lost their lives during the genocide." See <http://galerija110795.ba>. Accessed February 21, 2018.

<sup>332</sup> Entitled "July 11," the space was donated by Swanee Hunt, the former US Ambassador to Bosnia, on September 20, 2003.



claims) was still undetermined at that point, the tombstone offered survivors with the opportunity to reimagine the landscape as a place of recovery and healing.<sup>333</sup>

Nearby is the largest religious washing area that includes individual faucets as well as marble benches. Several fountains are also located throughout the cemetery, all of which are integral for Muslim prayer and washing rituals (Figure 3.12).<sup>334</sup> At the cemetery's upper perimeter is a viewing platform that was added in 2013 (Figure 3.13). The cemetery is shaped like a flower with seven petals extending in a few directions with each one of the thousands of identical tombstones facing in the direction of Mecca (Figure 3.14).<sup>335</sup> New graves feature a simple green wooden marker that contains deceased's full name as well as years of birth and death (Figure 3.15). After one year, it is replaced with a white tombstone inscribed with a Muslim prayer designating the deceased as a martyr (*šehidi*).<sup>336</sup> The fact that all of the tombstones are the same, save for personal data about each victim, simulates another design trope in war cemeteries vis-à-vis the near uniformity of all the graves. In the case of Srebrenica, this is problematic because the Memorial simultaneously makes two conflicting claims about the dead.

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<sup>333</sup> On the practical and political complexities of compiling accurate registries of Srebrenica's missing persons, see Wagner 2008, 92-93.

<sup>334</sup> Beyond their religious significance, Wagner describes the integration of water as an intentional design element that creates a calming atmosphere. Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 42 and Wagner 2010, 69.

<sup>335</sup> Wagner 2010, 67. The description of the cemetery's use of a floral shape is based on my own personal insights and from interviews with the Memorial's staff over the years. It is coincidental that my use of the word "petal" is also used throughout the Memorial-specific literature.

<sup>336</sup> Bougarel 2007 and Wagner 2008, 241. On the private property bordering the cemetery, sheep graze not more than five feet away from the tombstones while nearby is a small octagonal monument that says "Srebrenica juli 1995."

### **Numbers, Locations and Identities Matter**

In Bosnia, nearly every aspect of the dead remains the subject of a fierce debate among the country's three ethnic groups. This includes arguments over the lists of the missing and killed; their ethnicities; their DNA identifications (including which agencies conducted the forensic analyses); their wartime status (as civilians or soldiers); where and when they died; how their bodies and/or body parts were recovered; and their final burial locations (including if their coffins were dug up and reburied).<sup>337</sup> Verdery argues that politicizing dead bodies in the former Yugoslavia is connected to two phenomena. There was an "intense burial regime" connected to fees paid to the Communist government to lease the plots of land where families interred their dead as well as the use of the dead to "reconfigure" nation-states based upon ethnic identity as the country collapsed.<sup>338</sup>

Controversies about and abuses of what Verdery calls the "nameless dead" killed during fractious conflicts are not, of course, restricted to the Western Balkans.<sup>339</sup> Casualties from Spain's Civil War that ended in 1939, for example, still remain contentious nearly eighty years later. Recently exhumed mass graves there still invoke fiery partisan reactions from former combatants and enemies, many of whom are elderly. Verdery as well as Renshaw, in her study on mass grave exhumations in Spain, assert that the dead become political vessels of collective memories that communities use to lay claim to larger stretches of history (e.g., temporality) as well as terrain (e.g., spatiality).<sup>340</sup> There is a distinction between how individuals reconcile their private losses versus how their community undertakes collective remembrance initiatives.

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<sup>337</sup> See Ball et al. 2007; Jugo and Senem 2015; Juhl 2016; and Wagner 2011.

<sup>338</sup> Verdery 1999, 97-98.

<sup>339</sup> Verdery 1999, 97.

<sup>340</sup> Renshaw 2011, 27 and Verdery 1999, 96.

While I take up the commemoration's dynamics in a subsequent chapter, here I am interested in what is taking place below ground: specifically who is buried at the Memorial as well as how they are characterized. The site sits at the center of genocide's memory battle with the number of dead, 8,372, being most famous or infamous set of digits in the country depending upon which narrative of July 1995 is put forward. As of 2018, 6,610 identified men and boys have been buried. Also interred in the cemetery are fourteen females (one of whom is Hasan's mother) as well as one of four Bosnian Croat men killed during the genocide, three of whom still remain missing.<sup>341</sup>

Within the greater Srebrenica region, including the five *opštine* of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Rogatica, and Višegrad, approximately 296 villages were ethnically cleansed during the first three months of the war, according to one study.<sup>342</sup> Beginning in 1992, people died from starvation, executions, bombings, weather exposure, maltreatment, torture, and from other injuries amongst an estimated 50-60,000 people who were on the run for their lives.<sup>343</sup> A close friend who survived the *marš smrti* said that during the war no one in the enclave kept track of how many people died between 1992 and July 1995. In other words, individual families may have sustained losses at different times over the years.

After the site's land was secured, a second issue arose. Namely, what to do about the families who wanted to bury their dead kin together—regardless whether they were killed before or during the genocide. While this is known amongst survivors and activists, it is never discussed candidly with visitors. I was greeted with a sly smile by a few survivors,

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<sup>341</sup> 2011 Summer University Srebrenica program briefing given by the Srebrenica Memorial's Director, Mersed Smajlović. On women buried in the cemetery, see Sorguc 2018.

<sup>342</sup> Toljaga 2010.

<sup>343</sup> Suljagić 2017.

including the Memorial's Director, when I enquired about it. Emin, a 36 year old survivor, highlighted this tension. He believes that victims from 1992 through 1995 should be buried together while making it clear to visitors who regularly ask about it.<sup>344</sup>

There are seventy-five people who fall into this category.<sup>345</sup> Although their individual headstones clearly state the year of death you have to look painstakingly amongst thousands of other graves to find them as they are scattered throughout the cemetery (Figure 3.16).<sup>346</sup> This detail is routinely exploited by genocide deniers who claim that the numbers of the dead are inflated and manipulated by the Memorial's stakeholders, according to Sandra Orlović, the Belgrade-based Humanitarian Law Center's (HLC) Executive Director.<sup>347</sup> Yet, there is a seemingly logical reason: before there was an official policy about burials after the Memorial was officially opened, there were several families who wanted to lay to rest their loved ones together. Depending upon with whom I spoke, it was hard to gauge the motivations of as well as who exactly was in charge of the decision to first allow and then separate the dead from 1992 and 1995. This kind of post-war confusion about how to bury the dead is not new. In the immediate aftermath of

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<sup>344</sup> Personal interview, "Emin," age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>345</sup> Personal interview, Mersed Smajlović, Director, Srebrenica Memorial, August 23, 2016.

<sup>346</sup> A credible source who spoke on the condition of anonymity told me in off-the-record conversation there is one instance where the name of a person, who is very much alive, is still listed on one of the commemorative wall panels. For reasons unknown, the Memorial's management team has yet to correct this. This creates a double-bind of sorts: if the site does fix the panel, then it feeds into the deniers' claims, possibly triggering a new round of debates about the exact numbers and identities of the dead. If it is not fixed, the site will continue to be accused of hiding and/or omitting this fact. I do not claim that there is any sort of cover up here; it is highly likely that it is an unintentional mistake made years ago before larger numbers of people returned to Srebrenica. Still, as an international institution with authority over how the genocide's memory is articulated, this is a gross oversight that would be remedied at Holocaust-era memorial sites. Adding more confusion is that some of these panels have had other kinds of unknown mistakes that were corrected, judging by some of the stone sheets with the victims' names that are randomly housed within one of the Battery Factory's warehouses.

<sup>347</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

WWI, Winter describes how national governments struggled to create consistent policies about what to do with the tens of thousands of soldiers killed during the war amidst their families' persistent demands to inter their kin close to home.<sup>348</sup>

Throughout my interviews there seemed to be two camps. The first, and more cynical view, was that the Memorial's stakeholders, backed by the Islamic Community, decided to segregate those persons killed in the genocide as a way to call attention to Srebrenica even when it meant that family members who died outside the July 1995 window could not be buried together. This frustrated the families in question who believed that the genocide started in 1992. The second camp says there was no ulterior motive; the site was solely created to memorialize the dead killed during July 1995. The site's name says as much and so there should not be any controversy, according to Hajra, Ahmetović, and Čelebić.<sup>349</sup> A victim is still a victim, Damir Pestalić, Srebrenica's main Imam told me, regardless of where they are buried.<sup>350</sup> I am less interested in unearthing exactly what transpired and more focused on why, seventeen years since the site opened, the Memorial does not publicly engage with this issue.

The most important ramification for the site is this: regardless of what took place behind the scenes, I argue that the site's silence about this fact fuels denial. By allowing this public secret within Bosnia to flourish as well as by refusing to address it, the Memorial's stakeholders also inhibit any critical thinking about the genocide which may go against their entrenched narrative of victimization. In other words, the very act of omitting this fact—by remaining silent about it—also replicates a division with the

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<sup>348</sup> Winter 1996, 24.

<sup>349</sup> Personal interviews: Sadik Ahmetović, President, Governing Board, Srebrenica Memorial, September 9, 2016 and Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>350</sup> Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

surviving community. It allows the dead to become further politicized by deeming some as worthier of memorialization than others.

There is a second concern that receives little attention: approximately 150 to 200 victims are buried elsewhere.<sup>351</sup> This point came up during some of my interviews, including those with local Bosnian Serbs, a couple of international researchers working within that particular community, and in an off-the-record conversation with an OHR contact. It seemed to be common knowledge despite the silence about it at the site. At least three possible reasons stand out, the first one being that some victims were buried before the Memorial was founded by families who did not want to wait, according to Čelebić.<sup>352</sup> They also did not want to move their dead, many of which were already located in family gravesites once the site opened.<sup>353</sup> The second reason is that families are not actually required to bury their dead in the cemetery at the Memorial. They have the choice to inter the remains of their kin wherever they choose, be it in a family burial ground or another local cemetery, as several informants told me. Again, this is not mentioned anywhere at the Memorial.

The third reason is related to the Islamic Community's decision to cast all of the genocide's victims as *šehidi*. According to a contact at OHR, a smaller percentage of Srebrenica's surviving population takes issue with the labeling of their kin as *šehidi*, especially those of the Yugoslav generation where religious affiliation was tied to the state.<sup>354</sup> This is irrespective of whether the victim identified himself as such, possibly

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<sup>351</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #2, August 4, 2016.

<sup>352</sup> Wagner 2008; Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>353</sup> Personal interviews: Nedim Jahić, activist, August 8, 2016 and Hajra Čatić, Women of Srebrenica, September 2, 2016.

<sup>354</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #1, September 1, 2016. See also Bougarel 2007.

fueling some of the decisions to bury them elsewhere. As my interlocutor at the ICTY remarked, how would the victims feel if they were buried with these religious icons?<sup>355</sup>

The *šehidi* phenomena is not unique to the Memorial. For example, nearly all of the Muslim cemeteries and memorials in the capital of Sarajevo are *šehidi*-oriented, a point downplayed during my interview with Nurudin Džiho, the Director of *Fond Kantona Sarajevo* (Memorial Fund Sarajevo).<sup>356</sup> The role of the *šehidi* (as well as similar practices amongst Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats) in post-war religious memorialization has also been written about extensively.<sup>357</sup>

The legal determination of genocide in Srebrenica's court cases confers a blanket of innocence upon those who were murdered, especially given the preponderance of forensic evidence showing ligatures tied around the hands and blindfolds around the eyes of the bodies exhumed from the mass graves.<sup>358</sup> I am in no way refuting this. As it relates to memorializing the events of July 1995 at the site, though, how do you then talk about the ABiH's defense of the enclave? Meaning: there was an army inside of Srebrenica, rag tag and disorganized though it may have been. We know from ICTY documentation, video footage, and personal accounts, that some of the men who attempted to escape through the mountains were soldiers. Again, this is common knowledge that has been largely (but not entirely) omitted from the Memorial's depiction of events.

Bougarel highlights how portraying the dead as civilian victims, rather than as *šehidi*, implicitly connects them to the international memory regime of Never Again noting that,

Most of the men slaughtered by the Bosnian Serb Army after the fall of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 [sic] were Bosnian Army soldiers. However, the term

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<sup>355</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, ICTY, August 4, 2016.

<sup>356</sup> Personal interview, Nurudin Džiho, Director, *Fond Kantona Sarajevo*, August 3, 2016.

<sup>357</sup> See Bougarel 2007 and 2018; Sokol 2014; Tokača 2010; and Velikonja 2003.

<sup>358</sup> Manning 2000 and Sarkin et al. 2014.

most frequently used in public commemorations is ‘victims’ (*žrtve*). In 1996, the Bosnian authorities designed 11 July as the Day of Remembrance of Civilian Victims of the Fascist Aggression (*Dan sjećanja na civilne žrtve fašističke agresije*), thus implicitly classifying the men of Srebrenica as civilians, and enshrining their deaths into Western time (11 July), whereas the sacrifice of the *šehidi* is related to Islamic time (2 sevval). This semantic shift underscores the fact that the men of Srebrenica were slaughtered after their surrender and facilitates the presentation of the massacre as part of a genocidal project comparable to the Holocaust [author italics].<sup>359</sup>

By not dealing with this issue head on—acknowledging that some of the genocide’s victims were soldiers—the Memorial ironically fuels the ongoing controversies about the commingling of civilian and soldier graves. This exact sentiment was voiced by several Bosnian Serb interviewees. One, a prominent stakeholder in town, queried off-the-record how he could pay his respects at the site when killers were buried at “Potočari.”<sup>360</sup> Orlović told me that she does not understand when Bosnian Serbs bring this up since no one really talks about the fact that the cemetery in Bratunac is comprised of both.<sup>361</sup>

The mixing of graves is one reason international representatives and Bošniak politicians cite for not attending annual Bosnian Serb counter-commemorative events. Miloš Milovanović, the president of Srebrenica’s Municipal Assembly, explained that most of the Bosnian Serb memorials and commemorations were not supported by and/or in the interest of the Srebrenica *opština* which had been led by a Bošniak mayor the past seventeen years (up until late 2016). He said that it was also complicated to separate out these losses since the surviving families receive a higher pension for deceased veterans.<sup>362</sup> On the flip side, Pestalić said the Bosnian Serb population should unbundle

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<sup>359</sup> Bougarel 2007, 179.

<sup>360</sup> “Potočari” is often used to delineate between the town of Srebrenica and the Memorial which is physically located in the town of Potočari. Personal interview, name withheld, Bosnian Serb stakeholder, Srebrenica *opština*, September 2, 2016.

<sup>361</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

<sup>362</sup> Personal interview, Miloš Milovanović, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, September 1, 2016.



their innocent victims from soldiers to make it easier for others to commemorate their dead, interestingly pointing to the Memorial as an example.<sup>363</sup>

### **Revenge versus Justice**

One of the central questions in this chapter is whether it is possible for a cemetery focused on the political and religious memorialization of the genocide's victims located in a hostile environment to simultaneously function as a localized transitional justice mechanism. The paradigm is premised on the notion of progression, moving from a state of otherworldly and savage chaos to a grounded and civilized democracy.<sup>364</sup> This kind of progress hinges upon the pursuit and delivery of justice with an acute emphasis on indictments, prosecutions, and convictions. But where, as Hinton posits, does transitional justice land?<sup>365</sup> How is justice expressed outside of the courtroom in places that are much more sacred such as cemeteries? I argue that there is an underlying message about punitive justice that is woven throughout the cemetery, subtle as though it may be.

For many of the survivors I have spoken with over the years, the Memorial offers a moment's respite in the daily emotional struggle to get on with their lives. Adnan described to me how, when a family member is identified, "you just want to catch up" since "he's still a part of you," which, he said, a lot of visitors do not understand.<sup>366</sup> Yet, others are angrier that many lower-level perpetrators of the genocide were never prosecuted, some of whom continue to live alongside them. One of the early concerns during the site's initial phase was that some of the male survivors pushed for a muscular

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<sup>363</sup> Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>364</sup> Hinton 2018, 16, 113.

<sup>365</sup> Hinton 2018, 29, 36.

<sup>366</sup> Personal interview, "Adnan," age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

design in the cemetery, according to Čelebić.<sup>367</sup> They wanted to show what happened but in an aggressive way, for example, by building a domineering mosque surrounded by pointy headstones. The international representatives, on the other hand, were focused on preserving the site's integrity and duty to remember.<sup>368</sup> Buturović underscores the overt influence that religion has played in post-conflict Bosnia. She notes that the role of the Islamic Community in Bosnia has led the way for “combining traditional religious language about worldly injustice with transcendental retribution and final rewards.”<sup>369</sup>

Another civil society activist raised a more theoretical issue that touches upon that same basic sentiment—how to contain and/or channel survivors' rage. In this case, it has to do with the three-sided vertical marble panel that features the Bosnian, English, and Arabic inscriptions (Figure 3.17):

[*Bosnian*]: U ime Boga Milostivog, Samilosnog Molimo Te Bože Svemoguću, Neka tuga postane nada! Neka osveta bude pravda! Neka majčina suza Bude molitva: Da se nikome nikad Ne ponovi Srebrenica! Reisu-I-ulema, Srebrenička molitva Potočari, 11 juli, 2001 [spelling and punctuation transcribed exactly]

[*English*]: In the Name of God the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate We pray to Almighty God, May grievance become hope! May revenge become justice! May mothers' tears become prayers That Srebrenica Never happens again To no one and nowhere! Raisu-I-ulama, Srebrenica Prayer, Potočari, July 11, 2001 [spelling and punctuation transcribed exactly]

To her, the phrase, “*neka osveta bude pravda*,” could be interpreted as “may revenge become justice” (which is what the English engraving says) or “may justice become revenge.” I consulted with another native Bosnian speaker and professional translator. She said that, grammatically speaking, the latter possible interpretation (“may justice become revenge”) is incorrect since the sentence is written using a typical Bosnian

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<sup>367</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Buturović 2015, 104. See also Bougarel 2007 and 2018.

subject-verb-complement structure. In other words, the possible dual interpretation could very well be the activist's personal sentiment.

Still, this issue forced me to look at the English phrase, “may revenge become justice.” Here in very place dominated by the dead at the Memorial, what does revenge mean? And what form of justice does it refer to? Perhaps when the cemetery was opened, there was still hope that the ICTY and WCC would convict all the war criminals as well as that Serbia would apologize for the tragedy. Two decades later, we know that the judicial process has been punctuated by highs and lows for Srebrenica's survivors.

In that time, the notions of what justice means have expanded beyond the legal realm, most especially in the practices and mechanisms associated with transitional justice. As I have argued elsewhere, memorialization can help strike this balance, providing victims and survivors with a symbolic form of reparative justice that gives voice to their specific needs in rebuilding their community.<sup>370</sup> The Memorial literally and figuratively sits at this crossroads. It is a physical measure of localized justice because it is built within the RS. The site sends a clear indication to Bosnian Serb authorities as well as local communities throughout the Podrinje that the survivors will not be denied their rights.

The Memorial also telegraphs another message, albeit one that is more conflicted, about what Srebrenica's Bošniak community wants, as dictated by the site's stakeholders (i.e., the Mothers, nationalist politicians, and the religious community). In this case, their focus arguably appears to be on Srebrenica vis-à-vis the place, the genocide, and its survivors as the ultimate symbols of a Bošniak national identity rooted in victimhood. The starkness of the statement “may revenge become justice” appears out of place inside

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<sup>370</sup> L. Cohen 2017, 57.

a religious space devoted to honoring the dead. This particular phrase could refer to the process of passing from a negative emotional space into a positive one, a distant reference to one of transitional justice's underlying assertions about moving from chaos into peace. Still, it is worth questioning this sentiment since this marble structure is erected not once but twice inside the cemetery, one near the *musala* and the other towards the far right edge of the property close to the highway.

The use of this monument is neither accidental nor subtle. True, it is linked to a form of Never Again in the inscription. Yet, it feels less about remembering the dead, in the form of honor and contemplation, and more about enacting some sort of righteousness, in the form of an unspecified kind of justice. The passage containing “may revenge become justice” also includes a telling phrase, “May mothers’ tears become prayers.” As Stover has argued, feelings about retribution and punitive justice may be more “hardwired” for Srebrenica’s older female survivors rather than their younger counterparts.<sup>371</sup>

Perhaps these two concepts about revenge and justice are related. In a religious setting, “may revenge become justice” could, arguably, reference retributive justice vis-à-vis an eye for an eye, known as *al-qisas* in the Quran.<sup>372</sup> This cemetery, while open to people from all religious denominations, is first and foremost a Muslim burial site and comprises the dominant part of the Memorial. The integration of religion and ethnicity into the cemetery’s design underscores another tension within the conception of this site as a reparative justice mechanism as opposed to a monument to the dead. Local realities

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<sup>371</sup> Stover 2005, 4.

<sup>372</sup> Both Emin and Kerim mentioned that an eye for eye does not resolve anything. Personal interviews: “Emin,” age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016 and “Kerim,” age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

and global aspirations collide since its mandate mentions none of this.<sup>373</sup> The only reference to burials is made obliquely, couched, once again, within the universalizing discourse of the international human rights regime:

*Out of respect further* [sic] for the solemn duty which falls upon the living to ensure the dignity and proper burial of the dead, and respecting the rights of the families of the deceased to bury their dead in accordance with their religious beliefs, a right which flows from Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.<sup>374</sup>

### Images



Figure 3.2: Entrance to the cemetery at the Srebrenica Memorial, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

<sup>373</sup> Bickford 2014, 503.

<sup>374</sup> OHR 2007.



Figure 3.3: Bosnian national flags near the entrance of the Srebrenica Memorial (with the *Battery Factory* in the background), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.4: The *musala*, the largest open air Muslim prayer space in Europe, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 3.5: The *turbe* inside the cemetery, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

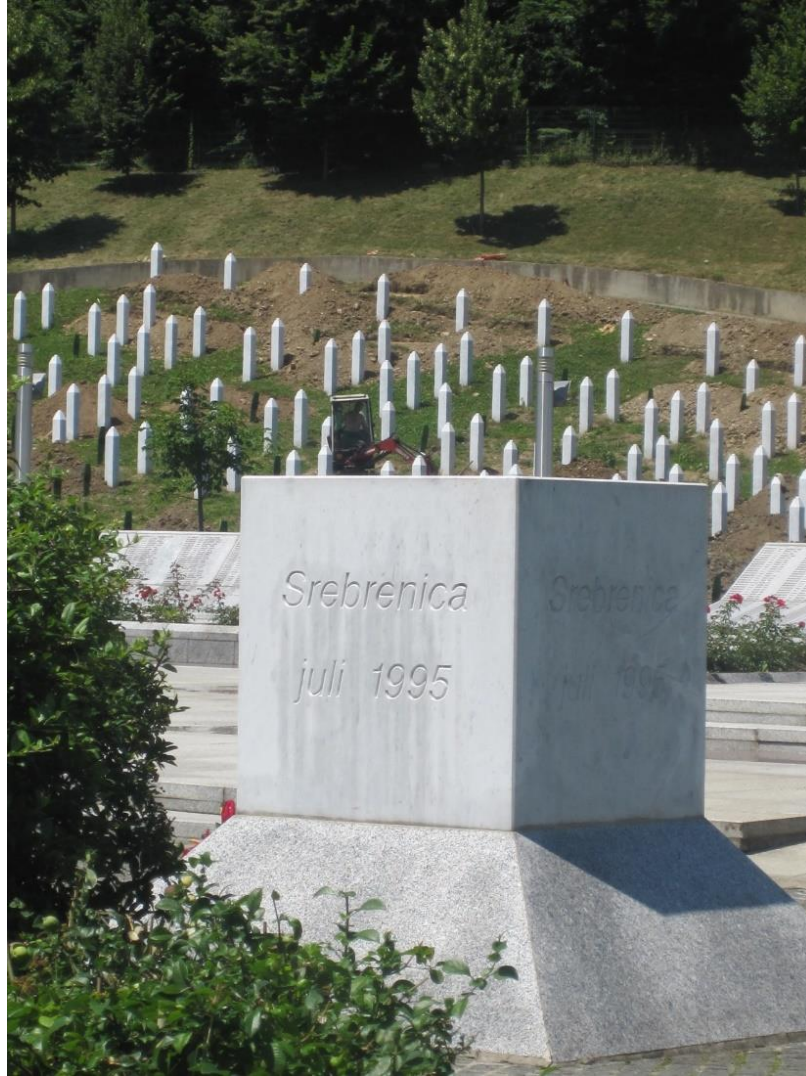


Figure 3.6: "Srebrenica juli 1995," the first commemorative stone placed inside the cemetery, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 3.7: The Memorial Stone listing the number of victims and the *opštine* from where they hailed, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.8: Cubic water fountain towards the entrance of the cemetery, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.9: Remembrance wall inside the cemetery, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 3.10: Blank remembrance panels (left side) to accommodate the names of victims that may be identified in the future, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.11: “July 11” Exhibition Room inside the cemetery featuring photographs by Tarik Samarah, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.12: Primary fountains and benches for ritual washing inside the cemetery, in accordance with the Islamic faith, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.13: Viewing platform inside the cemetery, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



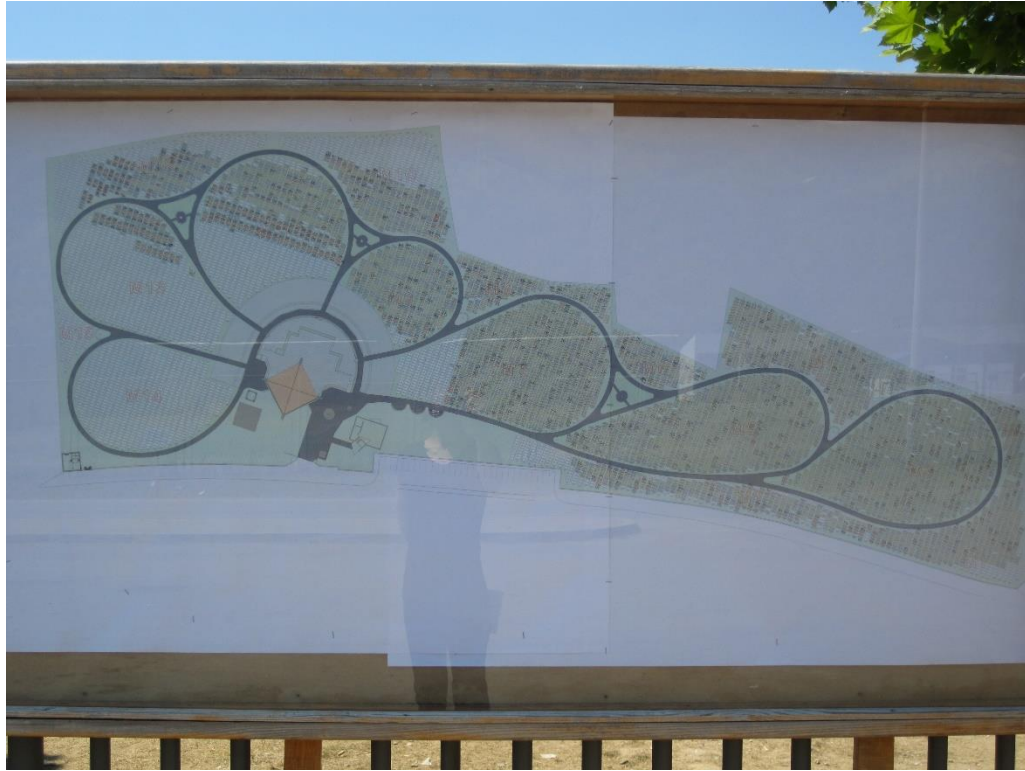


Figure 3.14: Design of the cemetery displayed on the property's perimeter, 2010.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 3.15: The temporary green wooden grave marker is changed to a permanent white gravestone one year after the victim is buried, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

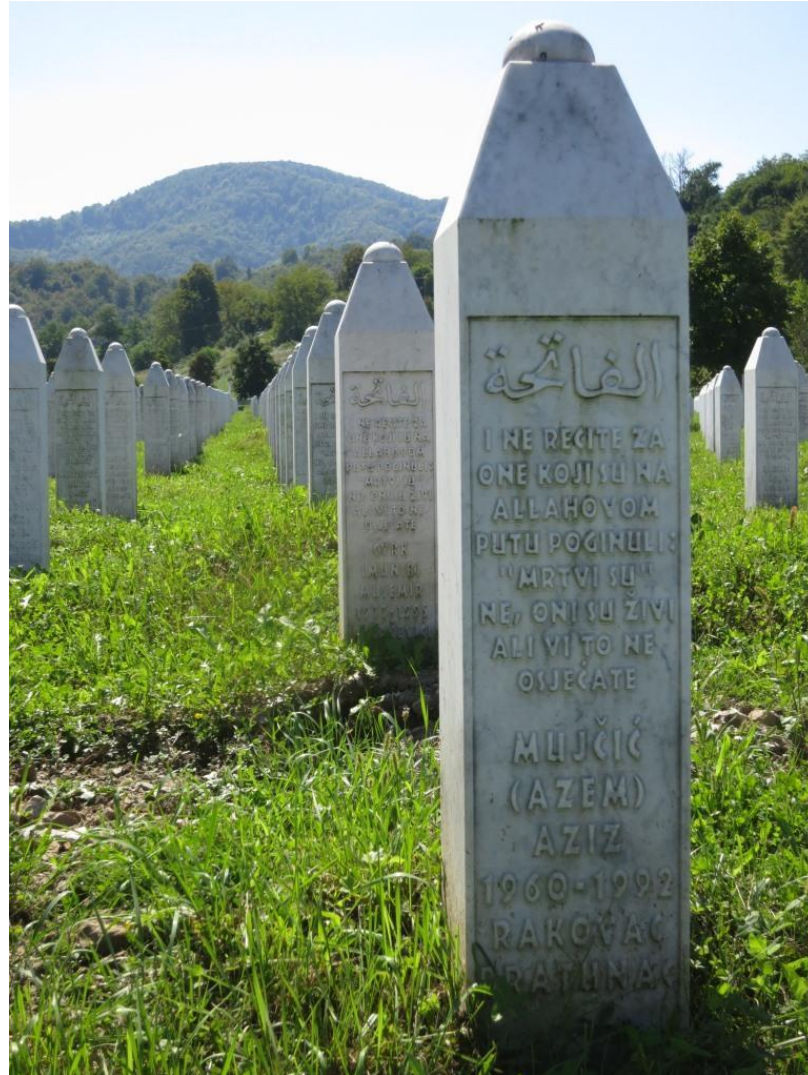


Figure 3.16: Tombstone of a victim who died in 1992 buried inside the Srebrenica Memorial, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 3.17: “May Revenge Become Justice” triangular stone plaque containing identical inscriptions in Bosnian and Arabic on its other two sides, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



#### **Chapter 4: The Commemoration—Personal Moments, Profane Memorialization**

Their stillness is the reason why these memories of former times do not awaken desire so much as sorrow—a vast, inapprehensible melancholy. Once we had such desires—but they return not. They are past, they belong to another world that is gone from us.

— Erich Maria Remarque  
*All Quiet on the Western Front*

### **The Serbs Are Coming**

“The Serbs are coming, the Serbs are coming. Come on!”

Just one day after the 2015 commemoration and the town is remarkably quiet now that the throngs of people have left. Some people, myself and a friend included, are congregating at a small bar across from Srebrenica’s town hall. Over the years, a few survivors have told me to steer clear because it is a “Serb café.” A small contingency of journalists has gathered close by as have some security officers. The energy feels expectant and tense, and most of the café’s patrons speak in lowered voices. My attention shifts when a mutual colleague says hello. A moment later, my friend says “it’s over.”

“Huh?”

“They just came to place flowers in front of the building.”

And with that, the crowd dispersed. All of this nervous anticipation was about a few older women who came into the center of Srebrenica to place flowers in front of the municipal building; their peaceful gesture is repeated again the following year (Figure 4.1). This small but symbolic act is sandwiched between a series of other more controversial events that are planned the two days after the commemoration in and around Srebrenica as well as the neighboring *opštine*. July 12 and 13 are when the Bosnian Serb community holds its own counter-commemorations in smaller villages, including in Zalazje and Skelani. The centerpiece event is on the twelfth at the military cemetery in Bratunac several kilometers away.

Back in 2012 while waiting for the commemoration in Bratunac to begin, five or six middle-aged women appeared. Within moments, they brusquely asked me several questions about who I was and why I was there. They then badgered my contact with an

intimidating barrage of enquiries. What was her first name? Last name? Where was she from before the war? Where did she take shelter during the war? Where does she live now? She hastily explained to me in English that they were trying to figure out if she was Muslim—so she lied. Their suspicion was eventually assuaged.

“Do you see that yellow house on the hill? I told the army there were Muslims hiding there, so they went in and killed them,” said the heavyset woman to my immediate left.

On that day eight soldiers were buried. The mood was somber as the families said their tearful goodbyes. Three elderly women clad in black garb with matching headscarves tied at the base of their necks, wailed loudly over the coffins, an Orthodox religious tradition. The flag of the RS proudly flew over the cemetery. Of the hundred or so people in attendance, only three other internationals from a single NGO were present.

A serene older man with white hair and t-shirt emblazoned with the RS seal stood a few paces away, his hands clasped gently behind his back. About halfway into the ceremony a local politician, according to my contact, proclaimed that the project of the RS should continue. The families’ frustrations with the authorities were later reported in the press. It turns out that some of these men were soldiers and may not have been killed in July 1995, or even in the region at all.

Flash forward to July 7, 2016. While approaching that same café across from the municipal building, a friend who is a survivor comments offhandedly that they do not accept dogs—meaning that Bośniaks are not welcome. Past the café, two Putin posters are plastered on the window of an empty shop. Alongside it is another advertisement; this one is written in Cyrillic featuring a black and white photograph of an elderly woman holding what looks like a skull. The municipal buildings are in one of the images above

it. My friend explains, with much frustration, that the sign claims that they served as a concentration camp for Serb prisoners, although they were nothing of the sort based on his wartime recollections.

This poster is the counter-narrative of the genocide. Between July 12 and 13, 2016, there were supposed to be four events to commemorate the killings of Bosnian Serbs during the war. Two of the events are arranged in front of these buildings, the floral placement being one of them. The second event was scheduled at a chicken farm in Gornji Potočari, where Orić used to live; the third is the funeral in Bratunac.

The fourth takes place on July 13, 2016. Twenty odd photos have been haphazardly taped onto the town hall's exterior walls across the street from the café. Some images are scattered on the ground. These pictures allegedly show members of the ABiH in Srebrenica standing triumphantly near prostrated bodies. One shows a person lying face down, clearly dead, with a small dog crouching nearby.

"Got it," says a man holding a video camera as the car he is in speeds off.

Four days later I am standing inside the Bosnian Serb memorial room in Srebrenica that is located a few hundred feet from the *Poslovni Centar* (business center) in the middle of the town. The two-story building's exterior is a pale shade of pink; an identification plaque denoting its affiliation and the RS flag adorn the entrance. On the inside, it appears very similar in design to the one in Bratunac. There are many pictures of the dead and missing carefully displayed in small frames that line the walls. This main room also features Orthodox religious imagery and more RS flags.

Our guide appears to be a middle aged man, looking tired and scruffy despite wearing a neon colored track suit and matching baseball cap. There is apparently some gossip in

the community about him, tensions that often get lost in the heavily ethnicized discourse that paints both groups as monoliths. He emphasizes the “fallacies” of the genocide rather than focusing on the victims commemorated inside here. Almost matter of fact, he points out those people he knew and had to bury; most are from the village of Zalazje.

The second floor has a conference room doubling as small exhibition space. On the walls are several poster boards, many of them showing pictures of the same gruesome imagery that were taped onto the municipal buildings. These displays appear arbitrarily designed, essentially collages featuring press clippings and photocopied documents glued onto the boards. They are presented as an afterthought without a clear narrative to guide visitors, other than brief captions attached to random items.

When asked about the consistency of the victims’ photos downstairs, most of which are formal black and white headshots, the guide says these were the only ones available of the dead. These pictures sit in contrast with those of the genocide’s victims so often lining the survivor associations’ office walls and on protest banners. Most of those are in color, many cut out of old family photos or taken informally. Some are very blurry.

The familiar question about whether these Bosnian Serb victims were civilians or soldiers comes to mind. Why? Because the numbers and identities of the dead matter here, forming one of the pernicious strands of denial. The deceased simply cannot be left alone. Their identities are contested over and their deaths refuted, having been politicized in the perennial battle about which ethnic group is the bigger victim. The dead are also not an abstract statistic. Each was an individual with a story of birth and life but also of suffering and death. Their experiences often get lost in the piercing rhetoric of victimization and repudiation that consumes the war’s memory. These were people with

multiple and often intersecting identities that were not solely defined by their ethnic and religious affiliations. They were people swept up in the waves of war be it by choice, circumstance, or submission.

These themes remain top of mind during a conversation with a Bosnian Serb woman who is a representative of one of Bratunac's victims associations. She declines to participate in this study because she does not want to be another person on what she portrays as my "I spoke to Serbs" list. She has been characterized as a monster in the international press for much of what she discusses centers on genocide denial. I find it odd that she is the only woman I am able to meet from this community since women are at the core of remembrance initiatives amongst the genocide's survivors. It is this woman's body language that offers a glimpse of the war's real costs as well as the grey zone that exists behind the political provocations.

I notice that she keeps crossing and uncrossing her arms during the conversation. At points the corners of her mouth droop down and she struggles to keep maintain composure while her voice wavers. She also alternates between sitting up straight and slouching as though her body is fighting between being defensive or relaxed. None of these physical signals appear forced or rehearsed the way much of her story does. In these small gestures, it becomes clear that she is heavily traumatized and lost family members in the last war. In this fleeting space, it does not matter if they were soldiers or civilians; they were her kin. Her grief has been disavowed because she belongs to the perpetrators' ethnic group. From that perspective, it makes sense that she became one of the local stakeholders involved in keeping the discourse of denial alive even though she herself did not take part in the atrocities.



Figure 4.1: Commemorative flowers with Orthodox votive piece and candle placed by Bosnian Serb women in front of Srebrenica's municipal building, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

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The cemetery is the focal point of the site's single most important priority: burying the genocide's most recently identified victims. Visiting the cemetery as an individual to pay respects is an entirely different experience from being one of the thousands who gather to watch the burials. The commemoration arguably operates on four simultaneous planes: as a community regenerator, burial service, political rally, and macabre festival. At the same time, it is during this event where the genocide's hegemonic narrative proliferates throughout the world. More mnemonic stakeholders come into view,

including the Bośniak diaspora and the international press who reinforce the memory's monolithic frame of victims and perpetrators. Ashplant et al. argue,

The politics of war memory and commemoration *always* has to engage with mourning and with attempts to make good the psychological and physical damage of war; and wherever people undertake the tasks of mourning and reparation, a politics is *always* at work [author italics].<sup>375</sup>

Events of this kind push back against more idealized notions of how justice, truth, and memory are interpreted within post-conflict societies that are already expected to have transitioned to an idealized future. I argue that there is a gap in transitional justice's interpretations of restoration and repair at a politicized event where victimization is foregrounded to an extreme. Several processes are happening concurrently during the event: collective and vicarious memories are shaped, bereavement is performed, and ethno-nationalism is proclaimed in the public fora. Lost in the shuffle is the dignity for the dead whose remains become the canvas for different competitive claims and messages. In the first part of this chapter, I describe the range of commemorative and counter-commemorative events that are clustered around July 11. In part two, I discuss the different kinds of memories that are produced and transmitted during the event. Part three examines how the commemoration prioritizes politics over the needs of survivors. In the last part, I focus on how the Memorial's exclusive focus on burying the dead on a single day is a form of profane memorialization that obscures its educational mandate.

### **The Commemorative Cycle**

"Memorial season" is between March and July when commemorations take place across the region that corresponds with a larger number of wartime battles and civilian atrocities. The season raises an intellectual commotion in the communities where you

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<sup>375</sup> Ashplant et al. 2000, 9.



can, more or less, expect the tried and true arguments and divisions to resurface. For example, there is a palpable change in the atmosphere yet people are surprised when they are asked to contemplate whether it is okay to destroy the other person in this fashion.<sup>376</sup>

This question encourages them to identify with an ordinary person from the other group who faces the same fears, even if only for a moment.<sup>377</sup> While statements made by politicians from all sides focus on and get lost in theoretical debates that flourish in the cities, the language very much affects people in local communities which the former remain detached from. Individual tensions increase, and this particular OHR representative worries about the cumulative effects of this rhetoric on people who have had no break from the warmongering over the years. It only takes a match lit by a single individual, he told me, to set off a chain reaction.<sup>378</sup>

July 11 is the pinnacle of a series of commemorative events that take place at and/or center around the site. Beginning on July 8, several thousand people undertake the *marš mira* which retraces the steps, in the opposite direction, of the men who fled through the mountains during the *marš smrti*.<sup>379</sup> The 110 kilometer, three day event begins in the hamlet of Nezuk (which during the war was in the “free” territory controlled by the ABiH) and ends in Potočari on July 10 right in front of the Memorial.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #1, September 1, 2016.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Many scholars have written about these commemorative events from a variety of perspectives. My analysis is based upon having attended the event five times (in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016) and parts of the *marš mira* twice. This is by no means a comprehensive account of these events. At the same time, these are intensely experiential, making it difficult to remain objective.

<sup>380</sup> There is tremendous comradery amongst the marchers, the majority hailing from across Bosnia who wear colorful t-shirts bearing the names of their villages. Survivors of the *marš smrti* as well as other war-related atrocities take part as does a small band of international participants (Figure 4.3). This positive spirit helps to mitigate the intensity of the physical hike as well as the disturbing scenery: a large number of temporarily erected signs pointing out where mass graves were previously exhumed (Figure 4.4).

On July 9, the coffins arrive on a caravan of trucks, although by 2016, it was just a single one due to the dwindling number of victims to be buried. The trucks drive from Visoko City Cemetery through Sarajevo's narrow streets and onwards across the RS until they reach the Memorial.<sup>381</sup> The vehicles bear the Bosnian national flag and are covered in flowers placed by mourners along its journey. These mementos are carefully removed in front of a crowd of a few hundred onlookers who stand in silent observation.<sup>382</sup> Meanwhile, the media aggressively jockey for the best position to get the first shot of the green cloaked caskets, often pushing aside grieving family members (Figure 4.2).

One by one, the coffins are handed to the men in the crowd in a religious procession. Three to four men carry each one overhead while walking in between two lines of other men who stand facing each other. This process continues until all of the coffins are carefully placed in rows inside one of the smaller freestanding warehouses called the Great Hall. A small religious service led by two Imams follows. In the background, photographers, journalists, and other international visitors congregate as family members openly weep over the caskets (Figures 4.5 & 4.6).

On July 10, the marchers from *marš mira* emerge from the mountains and are greeted by an official procession of the reconstituted and ethnically-integrated Bosnian Army as well as a large crowd of onlookers (Figures 4.7 & 4.8).<sup>383</sup> A significant number of

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<sup>381</sup> The event is widely televised but not everyone greets the dead with respect. In 2015, hostile onlookers from the *Romanija* region threw rocks, according to a colleague.

<sup>382</sup> In 2015, these numbers spiked significantly given that it was the genocide's twentieth anniversary. That year, an estimated three thousand people were in attendance. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Izvještaj o Radu za period 01.01.2015 do 31.12.2015 godine (Work Report from the Period of January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015). [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj\\_o\\_radu\\_MC\\_za\\_2015.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj_o_radu_MC_za_2015.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.

<sup>383</sup> A separate group of marchers comes via a different route, entering the town of Srebrenica and then walking the additional five kilometers straight on to Potočari. In 2015, an estimated ten

participants head directly towards Srebrenica to rest and shower. However, a smaller band of marchers and soldiers join another separate group of people who have also come to the Memorial. These are the families, including a large number of women and little children, awaiting the religious service marking the transfer of coffins from the Great Hall to the cemetery. The coffins are carried overhead in the same fashion as the day before, although this time by a mix of male relatives, friends, community members, marchers, and soldiers (Figure 4.9). It is highly symbolic—men who completed the *marš mira* paying respect to those who did not survive the *marš smrti*.<sup>384</sup>

On July 11, the buses carrying mourners from across Bosnia begin arriving in Potočari after dawn.<sup>385</sup> They park on the lawn in front of the Battery Factory, providing an eerie reminder of the vehicles that deported Srebrenica's female population. Mourners who arrive early claim their spots in the cemetery's shaded upper reaches. Others congregate under their umbrellas while eating treats they have brought with them. It is difficult to get in and out of the cemetery amidst the thousands of people trying to do the same, making it nearly impossible to reach the water tanker as well as a few portable toilets that are parked near the Great Hall across the road.

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thousand people were in attendance. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Izvještaj o Radu za period 01.01.2015 do 31.12.2015 godine (Work Report from the Period of January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015). [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj\\_o\\_radu\\_MC\\_za\\_2015.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj_o_radu_MC_za_2015.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.

<sup>384</sup> On the evening of July 10, the mood in Srebrenica is festive. People are animated and the town center is buzzing with families and friends reconnecting and laughing, celebrating life and each other. The first few times I experienced this it made no sense. Over time I have come to understand this is not only a coping mechanism but another spontaneous expression of identity, one that is not controlled by politicians nor the stakeholders of the genocide's memory.

<sup>385</sup> As I have witnessed in previous years, beggars were on the road. In 2016, one was in a wheelchair while several others brought their small children and babies. Across from the *bijela kuća*, an older woman prostrated herself on the ground while moaning wildly. "She's here every year," a friend uttered in disgust.

The political portion of the commemoration is attended by international dignitaries, prominent survivors, and other invited guests while members of the general public are excluded (Figure 4.10). Historically, this diplomatic ceremony has taken place inside the Great Hall as well as the Spomen Soba, although it was staged in the largest warehouse for the twentieth anniversary. In previous years, some of these politicized speeches took place inside the cemetery, although they were eventually banned in 2011.<sup>386</sup>

The sacral part of the service, the *dženaza*, begins afterwards in the *musala*. The haunting female voices singing Srebrenica Inferno (*Srebrenički Inferno*) eerily contrast with the Imam's chants, followed by a sixty minute Muslim prayer service.<sup>387</sup> Women are allowed to be in front close to the *musala* which is a post-war practice sanctioned by the Islamic Community.<sup>388</sup> The names and ages of the dead are read aloud while the coffins are carried overhead to their final designated resting spots after the ceremony concludes (Figure 4.11). As the men carefully lower each wooden coffin into the ground, one of the community's Imams leads a brief individual prayer before the male mourners fill in the graves with dirt using shovels that have been strategically placed in piles throughout the property. According to Wagner, this practice allows the family members to bury their dead in a dignified way that is in direct contrast with their gruesome deaths.<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> This was partially an outcome of an agreement that Kulaglič and Duraković made when they were both on the commemoration's steering committee so as to protect the ceremony from religious "hypocrisy." Personal interview, Amir Kulaglič, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

<sup>387</sup> The lyrics were written by the poet Džemaludin Latić and music arranged Đelo Jusić.

<sup>388</sup> Wagner 2008, 229 and 2010, 68. This was my experience in 2010 and 2011. However, during the 2016 event, in the immediate surrounding area where the coffins were laid out, it was dominated by men who pushed some of the younger women out of the way as the former began to line up in rows for the prayers.

<sup>389</sup> Pollack 2003b, 135.

### Counter-Commemoration

In the immediate years before and after the Memorial was founded in 2003, it was very dangerous for a growing group of surviving women and men to come back to the area to initially commemorate and eventually bury their dead. In 2005, a bomb intended to disrupt the tenth annual commemoration was discovered at the site.<sup>390</sup> An interviewee from the US Embassy who has been intimately involved with Srebrenica for many years and spoke with me off-the-record, claimed that the explosive device, in fact, had been planted by the Bošniak side to garner additional international attention.<sup>391</sup> She explained that she and her colleagues have come to expect these kinds of controversies and mini-dramas each year as the commemoration draws near.

Bosnian Serb nationalists have also congregated in the *opština* in past years to intimidate local Bošniak residents. In 2015, both Serbia and the RS promoted genocide denial as well as the enactment of new human rights violations targeting Bošniaks living in the entity.<sup>392</sup> This included the arrest of Orić on an outstanding Serbian warrant at the Swiss border. In response, Munira and the commemoration's organizers threatened to cancel the event if he was extradited to Serbia.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Hajdarpasić 2010, 60.

<sup>391</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, US Embassy, September 14, 2016.

<sup>392</sup> In a separate incident on June 25, 2015, some RS school officials began discriminating against Bošniak students by indicating on their school reports that their native language was “Bošniak” and not Bosnian, the latter of which is enshrined as one of the three constituent languages in the national constitution (the other two being Serbian and Croatian). This dispute is still ongoing and Bošniak parents, in some cases, have boycotted the schools. See Jukić 2015 and Panić 2015.

<sup>393</sup> Orić eventually returned to Bosnia where he stood trial at the WCC. Although he was acquitted in 2017, the prosecutor has since appealed to overturn that decision. On threats to cancel the 2015 commemoration, see Dalje.com 2015 and Zuvella 2015. On Orić's 2015 extradition, see B92 2015. On Orić's 2015 indictment, see Džidić 2015a. On his subsequent acquittal by the WCC, see Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2017. On the Bosnian Prosecutor's appeal of the acquittal, see Brkanić 2018.

In the past, the commemoration had a negative impact on Srebrenica's community relations. Seventeen years later, the security situation has shifted considerably. A wide-ranging collection of usually uncooperative agencies and actors, including police and representatives from the state, the entity, and Serbia, come together out of necessity given the massive coordination required for and safety concerns related to the event. And while the tensions remain high, they are still not as bad as they once were, according to a Jelena, a Bosnian Serb activist who works with a local NGO.<sup>394</sup>

The Bosnian Serb community's own counter-commemorative events in July are also coordinated affairs, arguably having less to do with the needs of individuals and more to do with power politics. Serbian nationalists, according to Orlović, manipulate the families who are either burying and/or honoring their kin.<sup>395</sup> Y. Zerubavel argues that these kinds of "countermemories"

offer a divergent commemorative narrative representing the views of marginalized individuals or groups within the society. The commemoration of the past can thus become a contested territory in which groups engaging in a political conflict promote competing views of the past in order to gain control over the political center or to legitimize a separatist movement.<sup>396</sup>

This is not to say that the Bosnian Serb community is marginalized—far from it. Rather, it is partially because, as Duijzings notes, Bošniaks and Bosnian Serbs construct oppositional narratives and divergent interpretations of the past going back centuries.<sup>397</sup> Marinko Sekulić Kokeza, a longtime journalist with RTV Srebrenica and one of the first reporters to return after the war, expressed this exact sentiment to me:

It's a different mentality here, the life, culture, social norms, all influences on what happened here. There is no agreement amongst ourselves and it depends on

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<sup>394</sup> Personal interview, "Jelena," Bosnian Serb activist #2, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016.

<sup>395</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

<sup>396</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995, 11.

<sup>397</sup> Duijzings 2007, 146.

each group's history. You cannot possibly understand what happened here. Because we still don't. Maybe history will or won't bear it out.<sup>398</sup>

At the same time, these counter-commemorations are the most visible attempt to shift the discourse away from the genocide towards the suffering of Bosnian Serbs using the same language of competitive victimization. They also represent a strategic attempt to counter the heavily negative (albeit justifiable) coverage that demonizes the community en masse as the frenzy of the Srebrenica commemoration kicks into high gear. Here, too, we see that civilians are caught in the crossfire between dueling ethno-nationalist platforms of exclusion which the DPA paradoxically sanctioned.

Bosnian Serb commemorative events in July are generally shunned by Bošniak politicians and international diplomats because they intermix the deaths of civilians and soldiers. In Bratunac, for example, the cemetery is a military one and features many black marble tombstones with intricately etched images of the dead in their uniforms holding their weapons (Figure 4.12). There was a sign indicating the graveyard's military status up until two years ago, according to an OHR representative.<sup>399</sup> She also said that the Bosnian Serb community does not have a huge cemetery solely for civilian victims.

Counter-commemorations also take place at other times during the year. Each village has its own day of remembrance, often serving as a cover for politician promotion that wind up converting these events into partisan gatherings focused on spreading narratives of denial.<sup>400</sup> For example, fifteen kilometers from Srebrenica is the town of Kravica, the site of a January 1993 attack by the ABiH against Bosnian Serb civilians. The local community there erected a massive black marble cross commemorating fallen dead

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<sup>398</sup> Personal interview, Marinko Sekulić Kokeza, RTV Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

<sup>399</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR, September 1, 2016.

<sup>400</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

Bosnian Serb soldiers from WWII as well as the last war (Figure 4.13). The Bosnian Serb monument is located within one kilometer on the same highway from the infamous unmarked warehouse where, on July 13, 1995, the VRS murdered between 1,000 and 1,500 Bošniak men (Figure 4.14).<sup>401</sup>

### **Re-Victimizing the Living**

The Srebrenica commemoration is an intimate, gritty, and agonizing experience publicized for all the world to see. Approximately 30-45,000 people descend upon the cemetery, including a mix Bošniak survivors from near and far as well as national and international spectators, all clamoring for a spot to observe the proceedings.<sup>402</sup> The media buzz throughout the overheated crowd, competing for compelling images and human interest stories. A massive video camera crane sweeps overhead, broadcasting the ceremony to thousands more at home. There is barely room to move about without bumping into or tripping over someone.

Lost within this jumbled mass are the mourners themselves. A great many are in various states of distress. Some faint while others collapse into sobbing heaps. And yet somehow in the middle of this madness, they have to jostle their way through the dense crowds to carry their loved one's coffin to the assigned plot. Some families have to do this a few times in the same day. Suljagić angrily recounted that during one of the most profoundly private moments of his life—burying his father—he had to push through

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<sup>401</sup> Duijzings 2007, 162 and Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 270-271.

<sup>402</sup> In 2015, it peaked at 60,000, according to the Memorial's estimations. In 2016 and 2017, the attendees were far less (still numbering in the thousands, though). The expectation is there will be another surge in 2020 to mark the genocide's twenty-fifth anniversary. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Izvještaj o Radu za period 01.01.2015 do 31.12.2015 godine (Work Report from the Period of January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015). [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj\\_o\\_radu\\_MC\\_za\\_2015.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Izvjestaj_o_radu_MC_za_2015.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.



thousands of onlookers to reach the grave. He still resents being forced to process his grief and undergo this ritual while strangers watched and took photographs.<sup>403</sup> How would I feel, he asked, if it were *my* family member? Kerim told me that when he buried his father, the entire experience was messed up, especially with all the photos being taken during the *dženaza*.<sup>404</sup> Adnan also expressed his revulsion about the way journalists commandeered this moment.<sup>405</sup>

When we look at the way the Memorial uses and abuses the dead, and here I am deliberately being provocative, we can start to notice how the coffins are consumed by different audiences. This includes their significance to individual survivors and the broader Bošniak community; their exploitation by the Memorial's stakeholders and politicians; and their grim fascination for outsiders. Another process is also underfoot in terms of the different types of memory making the commemoration generates. Not everyone in attendance is a relative of the deceased nor was everyone an eyewitness to the genocide's horror and/or a survivor of physical violence. This is not a typical war commemoration to the dead—it is also a burial service. For Bošniaks, the event serves as way to transmit memories of the genocide to the next generation. Hirsch calls this postmemory which “describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.”<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016.

<sup>404</sup> Personal interview, “Kerim,” age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>405</sup> Personal interview, “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016. On two separate occasions I have been photographed while crying. Both times the photographer physically put the camera in my face just as I looked up. The violation I felt in the moment cannot begin to account for what appears to be a repeated assault of survivors' personal and emotional space.

<sup>406</sup> Hirsch 2008, 103.

The commemoration is a public reiteration of both the original trauma and the postmemory of it. The event bonds Bošniaks living Srebrenica and elsewhere in Bosnia as well as from the diaspora by emphasizing their victimhood. The diversity of attendees also speaks to the large number of onlookers and well-wishers who attend that are not related to the survivors (e.g., through national, ethnic, religious, and/or extended familial connections). As an outsider, the transmission of recollections that do not stem from our personal experiences but rather through the feelings imparted by experiential witnessing are what Landsberg calls prosthetic memories. She explains

These are implanted memories, and the unsettled boundaries between real and simulated ones are frequently accompanied by another disruption: of the human body, its flesh, its subjective autonomy, its difference from both the animal and the technological.<sup>407</sup>

This kind of memory, I argue, is reproduced on two levels during the commemoration. The first is by witnessing individual families reconcile their grief, from their carrying the coffin overhead and placing it in the ground, to filling in the grave with dirt after the prayers have been said. These private burial ceremonies are inherently personal and painful; these are the moments when the genocide's horror becomes real for the viewer. It is the green draped casket that becomes the transmitter—Landsberg's additional "disruption"—which seals the prosthetic memory for the outsider. During the ceremony the anonymous dead become "my" dead, their pain becomes "my" pain.

A second form of prosthetic memory is transmitted by being one of thousands of people participating in the ritual of the commemoration. You become part of the community by "vicariously witnessing" and reliving its trauma.<sup>408</sup> "We" then have a duty

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<sup>407</sup> Landsberg 2005, 239.

<sup>408</sup> Zeitlin 1998.

to tell the “truth” about what happened because we see the victims with our own eyes. “We” also bear witness, assuming the moral imperative of keeping the memory alive. Verdery argues that this phenomena of creating a false relationship with the dead is a common feature of burial services in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>409</sup>

There is another performance taking place here based on the event’s dynamics: a reenactment of one part of the trauma. During those few hours, some mourners appear to relieve the emotional and psychic pain of *then* while reconciling the reality that their physical bodies are very much in the here and *now* on the same strip of road. By the time the commemoration begins, for example, there are close to one hundred buses that are parked on the grass in front of the Battery Factory, just a couple hundred feet from where the deportations began in July 1995.

While the religious ceremony might be focused on the victim’s spiritual restoration through burial, it appears as though the dead are fetishized when the coffins surf overhead a teeming crowd of thousands as their families carry them to their plots. Having numerous people attend the *dženaza* is both a cultural and religious tradition.<sup>410</sup> Denis Džidić, a Balkan Insight journalist, said that even at individual funerals, a small group is reflective while a larger group chatters away. After the burial, you also go out for coffee, he said, a social dynamic that is replicated at a larger level during the commemoration.<sup>411</sup> Still, the vast majority of my interviewees expressed their frustration with the event’s general tone and tens of thousands people who attend.

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<sup>409</sup> Verdery 1999, 108.

<sup>410</sup> Personal interviews: Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016 and Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>411</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

Hatidža Mehmedović of the “Mothers of Srebrenica,” based in Srebrenica, described three general groups of people who attend the ceremony: one group to bury their relatives; one group to advance their political prospects and job opportunities; and one group to see if what they saw on television was true.<sup>412</sup> Adnan wryly told me that many attendees in 2015 were there to take photos to post on social media.<sup>413</sup> He said that two kinds of people come: those who are there to show respect versus those who are only there to watch. He felt like foreign people view the residents of Srebrenica as if they are zoo animals, especially in July.<sup>414</sup>

Is it possible that the victims and survivors are victimized again at a site that seems to prioritize the *dženaza*’s publicity? Within this prism, concern for individual survivors appears most troublesome. In the final moments before they bury their kin, survivors still do not retain ownership over them; the dead still remain within the public sphere. On the one hand, Pestalić said that he was happy that there were large numbers in attendance when his father was buried.<sup>415</sup> He explained that every killed man was a person as well as a Bosnian national which means that each citizen has a responsibility to come and pay his or her respects. On the other hand, Adnan lamented that, “My family member is not a public person.”<sup>416</sup> He told me that the best way to show respect for the families as well as the dead was for visitors to go on any other day, a point reiterated by Amela Cosović-

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<sup>412</sup> Personal interview, Hatidža Mehmedović, Mothers of Srebrenica, August 11, 2011.

<sup>413</sup> Personal interview, “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>416</sup> Personal interview, “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

Medić, the Justice and Security Sector Leader at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia.<sup>417</sup>

### **Commemoration as Rally and Circus**

Commemorative events held at atrocity site memorials become the moments when the memory wars over past crimes and competing claims of victimhood come into clear view.<sup>418</sup> War commemorations are an example of an arena of articulation which Ashplant et al. define as, “Those socio-political spaces within which social actors advance claims for the recognition of their specific war memories, and for whatever other benefits they seek to derive from such recognition.”<sup>419</sup>

Within this arena, “official memories” of the conflict are both defined and refined for the nation-state to solidify, and arguably, weaponize, its hegemonic view of the past.<sup>420</sup> From this perspective, the past is brandished by politicians who wish to carve their ideology onto the national landscape.<sup>421</sup> These kinds of events also showcase the dramatic discord between how the transitional justice paradigm filters memories through a rights-based discourse (e.g., the right to remember, the right to the truth, etc.) versus the incongruent and messy ways that mnemonic battles play out on the ground.

Although the July 11 commemoration is technically about burying the dead, it also serves as the stage for the Islamic Community and Bošniak nationalist politicians to shape the discourse about Srebrenica. In this context, the Bošniak nation asserts its power through the lens of the genocide. The tragedy of Srebrenica is not just about the massacre

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<sup>417</sup> Personal interviews: “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016 and Amela Cosović-Medić, UNDP-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>418</sup> S. Cohen 2001, 234.

<sup>419</sup> Ashplant et al. 2000, 17.

<sup>420</sup> Ashplant et al. 2000, 22.

<sup>421</sup> Wertsch and Billingsley 2011, 27.

of 8,372 people; it also represents the wartime victimization of all Bošniaks across the country. The commemoration is the only one in the country that simultaneously functions on the international, national, and local levels.

Other events in the country certainly attract some outsiders, such as the commemorations in Prijedor, including those at the Omarska, Keraterm, and Trnopolje concentration camps as well as during the May 31st White Armband Day protest. However, these retain a local orientation, including a couple of hundred participants focused on advancing human rights and truth telling projects within that particular community, rather than serving as platforms for Bošniak nationalist claims to an audience of tens of thousands around the world.

July 11 is an example of what Y. Zerubavel calls a turning point. She argues

Because turning points often assume symbolic significance as markers of change, they are more likely to transform into myths. As such they not only reflect the social and political needs of the group that contributed to their formation but also become active agents in molding the group's needs.<sup>422</sup>

I argue that the genocide's exclusive temporal association with July 11 serves several purposes during the commemoration. First, it creates a clear demarcation for nationalist politicians and religious leaders to separate the genocide from the rest of the war—one in which the ABiH was an active offensive as well as defensive participant that also committed atrocities. Second, it enables these same stakeholders to use the genocide to advance claims for an integrated Bosnian state, led by a Bošniak majority population, with legitimized connections to the international community.

Third, the date serves as a two-pronged rallying cry: to ensure this kind of atrocity never happens to Bošniaks again while simultaneously serving as the signature day which

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<sup>422</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995, 9.

politicians and the diaspora use to sustain international interest in Bosnia by invoking the latter's guilt.<sup>423</sup> Fourth, in the immediate days leading up to the event, the national and international media focus on human interest stories and imagery that perpetuate entrenched ethnic stereotypes, including the demonization of all Bosnian Serbs. These are iterations of the Srebrenica bubble that come into focus during the event as well as when and how the genocide becomes a synonym for the Bosnian War.

There is an intense symbolism of tens of thousands of people coming back to Potočari to bury their loved ones in the places they were brutally cleansed from.<sup>424</sup> This practice is also one way the community rebuilds itself in the *opština* as well as how the diaspora reunites to process their feelings about displacement, expulsion, and return.<sup>425</sup> The Memorial fulfills its mission at a reparative level for the Bošniak community because it retains ownership over the landscape for this commemorative platform to exist.

However, Wagner highlights how the ceremony, rather than being restricted to a traditional burial service and thus depoliticized by its very nature, instead inflames ethnic hatred.<sup>426</sup> Čelebić said that July 11 is not a place for speeches and that the community was, nonetheless, abusing the burials for this express purpose.<sup>427</sup> Emin went a step further, arguing that the commemoration should be differentiated from the Memorial. He said that the event should be more connected with the victims rather than the politicians;

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<sup>423</sup> On several occasions with Bošniak friends and colleagues, I heard the statement “we are ready” while discussing what would happen should a new conflict break out.

<sup>424</sup> Verdery 1999, 103. See also Pollack 2003c and Wagner 2008.

<sup>425</sup> See Halilovich 2015.

<sup>426</sup> Wagner 2011, 41.

<sup>427</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

many of those who make the speeches should not do so since they contributed to what happened [i.e., their role in the war].<sup>428</sup>

This politicization drives both internal Bośniak community divisions as well as activates the Bosnian Serb community's own counter-commemorative events and alternative narratives. Mamut said the politics of memory at the commemoration only serves those who want to stay in power as well as to keep people apart.<sup>429</sup> On a related point, Milovanović told me that there are a lot of politics involved in the commemoration which, in turn, is a function of the site itself. He had recommended that politicians not give speeches at any of these events and only attend as a sign of support. (It is worth pointing out that he has chaired a Bosnian Serb victim's association in the past).<sup>430</sup> Politicians at previous commemorations have also been accused of furthering the victimized mentality of Srebrenica's survivors by encouraging them to align with SDA.<sup>431</sup> This point is shared by Duijzings who remarks that

The commemorative space thereby also becomes an important arena for ethnic and nationalist politics, which may overshadow the important psychological role it plays for the bereaved families. Muslim leaders, as well as representatives of family associations, may indeed at times use this commemorative area to promote a nationalist agenda. The same is of course true for the Serb side.<sup>432</sup>

One paradox of the commemoration as an arena of articulation is that it strengthens community relations while emboldening "struggle[s] over power and control."<sup>433</sup> Certain kinds of hierarchal relationships are also emphasized in the event revealing unexpected and unequal interactions between attendees. The surviving community's horrific losses

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<sup>428</sup> Personal interview, "Emin," age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>429</sup> Personal interview, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>430</sup> Personal interview, Miloš Milovanović, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, September 1, 2016.

<sup>431</sup> Hajdarpašić 2010, 223. See also Wagner 2011.

<sup>432</sup> Duijzings 2007, 164.

<sup>433</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995, xix.



are shouted by the site's stakeholders through the Memorial's megaphone. The same amplifier is used to simultaneously fight back against virulent denial; protest legitimate concerns about human rights violations; and, more troubling, advance political ambitions using the collective identity of the dead to achieve their aims.

There is another level of political and religious representation from other regional actors: activists from Serbia as well as groups from Turkey. The Serbian branch of Women in Black are a band of men and women who stage Srebrenica-related remembrance events in Belgrade to push back on state denial and public ignorance of the crime. A few of their representatives attend the commemoration, standing quietly in political and emotional solidarity with the victims. The groups from Turkey, though, are anything but silent. They make their presence known by shouting "Allahu Akbar" ("God is the greatest") as well as flying and/or wearing t-shirts bearing the Turkish flag. Their participation is provocative, especially during the *marš mira*, when these visual and verbal messages intentionally antagonize local Bosnian Serb residents.

Verdery argues that burial ceremonies in the former Yugoslavia have become ethnicized which "serve not just to reaffirm community but also to narrow and bound it."<sup>434</sup> At the same time, the needs of diplomatic guests are prioritized over grieving families. A politicized cycle of reciprocity underscores the dynamics between the stakeholders and the international community. In this feedback loop, attention is garnered, respects are paid, headlines generated, and some investments secured, only to start over again the next year.

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<sup>434</sup> Verdery 1999, 108.

In 2009, Simić argued that the commemoration was not just about owning the dead. Rather, it was about the recollection and possession of memories related to the “present and the future,” with the Mothers at the center.<sup>435</sup> Nearly a decade later, I contend that the event is more about optics, using the ritualized burials to promote Srebrenica’s master narrative of victimization with the Mothers still commanding the spotlight and buoyed by politicians, religious leaders, and an exploitative international press corps.

One small yet symbolic example of this is the creation of a viewing platform built inside the cemetery in 2013 ostensibly so that diplomats, politicians, and other anointed guests could have a good view of the proceedings. Innocuous looking as it may be the rest of the year, its main purpose is not to offer beleaguered survivors a place to sit during the event.<sup>436</sup> Čelebić told me that she had protested against VIP treatment during the burials from the very beginning yet was dissuaded by influential stakeholders from pursuing the matter.<sup>437</sup>

A second and more problematic example of the event’s political orientation is the debacle of the twentieth anniversary commemoration in 2015 when Aleksandar Vučić, then Serbian Prime Minister (now President) was invited. For Kulaglić, Vučić’s attendance was the organizers’ naked attempt to involve Russia as it was the same year

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<sup>435</sup> Simić 2009, 297.

<sup>436</sup> The political and monetary attention the commemoration receives appears disconnected from the rest of the site’s lagging structural improvements and financial shortfalls. This is despite the fact that all of these issues are duly noted in the site’s 2016-2018 Strategic Plan. Interestingly, the viewing platform is not mentioned in that same strategic report even though the rest of the site’s first phase of design is listed. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Srednjoročni Plan Rada 2016-2018 (Medium Term Work Plan 2016-2018). [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Srednjorocni\\_plan\\_rada\\_MC\\_2016-2018.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Srednjorocni_plan_rada_MC_2016-2018.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.

<sup>437</sup> Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

when Russia vetoed the UNSC resolution.<sup>438</sup> Although the focus should have on the 136 victims, the event instead emphasized scores of speeches by politicians, including one by Clinton. A second representative from the OHR told me that the families knew that 2015 was the last big year to make a political statement.<sup>439</sup> Hajra framed it differently: the twentieth anniversary was huge but now fewer people are coming and soon it will only be families visiting the cemetery.<sup>440</sup>

At the political welcoming ceremony, Hatidža pinned the Srebrenica commemorative flower on Vučić. Back on July 20, 1995, as an elected official of the Serbian Radical Party (*Srpska radikalna stranka*; SRS), he uttered the words, “If you kill one Serb, we will kill 100 Muslims.”<sup>441</sup> Most of the event’s rhetoric emphasized international solidarity and empathy for the victims. No one, though, from the general public was allowed inside the Battery Factory, so these speeches were broadcast on a screen erected on the Great Hall’s exterior wall (Figure 4.15). Immediately following this ceremony, politicians, each surrounded by security details, walked through the Battery Factory and cemetery, pushing tens of thousands of people to the sidelines.

Things reached a fevered pitch when the crowd began pushing and shoving as Vučić crossed the street to enter the cemetery on his way to sit in the viewing platform up the hill. As he set foot inside, the screams turned into chants as rocks and shoes were thrown and he was literally chased out.<sup>442</sup> Inevitably, the news coverage focused on the

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<sup>438</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulagić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016. On the Russian veto, see Reuters 2015 and Standish 2015.

<sup>439</sup> She said the families also promised that there would be no politicians involved in 2016 which still happened. Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #2, August 8, 2016.

<sup>440</sup> Personal interview, Hajra Ćatić, Women of Srebrenica, September 2, 2016.

<sup>441</sup> Fisk 2016 and Kroll 2015.

<sup>442</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty 2015.

motivation behind Vučić's visit.<sup>443</sup> The images of him being pelted by mourners is in and of itself problematic, opined Cosović-Medić, because it adds fuel to the fire about the problematic tenor of the event while playing up ethnic tensions.<sup>444</sup>

The Vučić episode laid bare some of the inherent contradictions embedded within the commemoration when we look at it through the prism of transitional justice. Here, the international community's reparative mechanism (in the form of a cemetery where burials are still taking place) seems to collide with its efforts to rebuild the Bosnian state, one that also constitutionally enshrined ethnic divisions into the post-war environment. However, the commemoration is also an arena of articulation that allows different stakeholders and participants to assert a variety of mnemonic and political claims that work against the very purpose of the transitional justice project in Bosnia.

In 2016, according to Kulaglič, the families asked the steering committee to take a position and say that no one who denies the genocide is welcome at the event. They refused to disinvite Vučić and the former Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić. This, he said, was hypocritical, offering further evidence that political promotion means more than the victims.<sup>445</sup> Mamut commented that it is obvious that there is no meaningful, long-term strategy driving this process while Cosović-Medić claimed that if the speeches continue, the entire ceremony will lose its meaning.<sup>446</sup> Many of my interviewees, colleagues, and friends over the years have said that Memorial offered them a place of contemplation while expressing tremendous frustration with the tenor of the

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<sup>443</sup> Džidić and Panić 2015 and Sarajevo Times 2015a.

<sup>444</sup> Personal interview, Amela Cosović-Medić, UNDP-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>445</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglič, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

<sup>446</sup> Personal interviews, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016 and Amela Cosović-Medić, UNDP-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

commemoration. Several have simply stopped going, preferring to pay their respects at the site on any other day.

Finally, July 11 is also the largest financial boon that Potočari experiences the entire year. It is, according to Kerim, the only chance for locals to earn tourist dollars.<sup>447</sup> The few cafes and restaurants in Potočari's village center are packed to the gills. Small informal souvenir kiosks are set up selling prayer beads, prayer rugs, and other religious items as well as Srebrenica-related books, commemorative t-shirts, and other miscellany. Food is sold by local vendors while many of the stands are run by people from outside the community, as colleagues have explained. Young women also sell the popular handmade commemorative Srebrenica flower pins. Still, the notion of the commemoration serving as a fair, with stands serving meat and *čevapi* as well as other trinkets, was off-putting to many of my interviewees. Kerim, for example, voiced his concern about Srebrenica becoming a marketplace for two weeks in July.<sup>448</sup>

### **Bones and the Burial Factory**

Some of the most iconic images associated with the genocide and the Memorial are the green-draped caskets, each of which contains a bags of bones (Figure 4.16).<sup>449</sup> The passage of time, the change in topography, the ravages of weather, and most dangerously, the shifting of landmines, make the identification of undiscovered human remains even more difficult to locate.<sup>450</sup> For Hajra, finding the bodies of missing persons extends well

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<sup>447</sup> Personal interview, "Kerim," age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Sarkin et al. 2014.

<sup>450</sup> Chick 2014 and Crosby and Džugum 2017. Many of these remaining victims are still considered missing or cannot be fully identified due to the lack of forensic material (i.e., the majority of the bones have not partially due to the vast areas of Bosnia that still contain active landmines as well as the refusal/hesitancy of people who may know where these graves are located to come forward. The situation is made more complicated due to the lack of international

beyond the practicalities of the site and the commemoration.<sup>451</sup> Duraković expressed similar concerns, saying that the decreasing number of burials were secondary to the bigger issue of the community's ongoing search for over one thousand people. He said the goal was to finalize the cemetery in ten years with the remaining bodies and bones.<sup>452</sup> Still, many survivors, activists, and people with close ties to the Memorial that I spoke with expressed their revulsion that the site is essentially a huge "burial company," spending vast sums of money on the commemoration. This to the detriment of the rest of the facility, much of which remains in various stages of collapse and disrepair.

During the 2015 commemoration one problematic installation highlighted how skeletal remains are instrumentalized in the discourse about the genocide's memory. The One Million Bones Project/Bones of the Balkans was a partnership between a US-based arts group and a Bosnian peacebuilding organization.<sup>453</sup> In 2013, a version of this initiative was displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. as a way for people to protest against genocide and mass atrocities. The purpose was to create a permanent memorial in Srebrenica using some of the materials from the original project. The Bosnian version was also intended to be a healing ritual; young people from around the country participated. From the looks on their faces, it appeared to be a positive experience. It was set up on the morning of July 9.

Despite having received numerous advanced permissions, the organizers were forced by the authorities to remove it just a few hours later. There was no official launch of the

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funding to support de-mining missions as well as the chance that the bones may have moved as a result of the heavy flooding across the country in the spring of 2014. See Reuters 2014.

<sup>451</sup> Personal interview, Hajra Ćatić, Women of Srebrenica, September 2, 2016.

<sup>452</sup> Personal interview Ćamil Duraković, then Mayor of Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

<sup>453</sup> For more information on the One Million Bones/Bones of the Balkans project, see <http://onemillionbones.squarespace.com/bones-of-the-balkans/>. Accessed February 4, 2018.

project nor any signage explaining what it was to the general public, including survivors, who were in various states of gathering in advance of the coffins' arrival. However, there were enough journalists buzzing around to turn it into a story, one that did not include the ruckus it wound up causing. This installation—a series of bones cast out of plaster, many with personal messages of unity—was spread out at the far exterior side of the Great Hall where the coffins were unloaded a few hours later (Figure 4.17). One cannot underscore the perceived lack of empathy here: inside each coffin is a bag of bones, the outlines of which can be seen through the thin green cloth that covers each coffin.

Each identified bone is the result of an extensive DNA analytical process.<sup>454</sup> The burial ceremony, in part, is designed to metaphorically re-associate disparate skeletal remains back into a person. The last time many of these survivors saw their loved ones was as living individuals; Munira told me she gave birth to a child and all that was returned to her was a few bones.<sup>455</sup> These fragments retain an emotional charge for survivors, something Renshaw also observed during exhumations in Kosovo.<sup>456</sup> The skeletal remains underwent tremendous barbarity before those that can be positively identified are eventually reburied. While Bosnia's post-war discursive landscape might be filled with the visual language of scattered bones, optically recreating this on the Memorial's property during the commemorative cycle underscores the profane treatment to which the dead are subjected. As Verdery notes,

Dead bodies have another great advantage as symbols: they don't talk much on their own (though they did once). Words can be put into their mouths—often

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<sup>454</sup> On the scientific intricacies in identifying Srebrenica's victims, see Wagner 2008.

<sup>455</sup> Personal interview, Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, August 15, 2016.

<sup>456</sup> Renshaw 2011, 124.

quite ambiguous words—or their own actual words can be ambiguated by quoting them out of context.<sup>457</sup>

In 2003 when then the site opened, 989 souls were laid to rest in three different intervals. The second largest burial ceremony took place in 2010 peaking at 775.<sup>458</sup> Since then, the number has steadily declined with 71 buried in 2017; in 2018, it was only 35 (Figures 4.18 & 4.19). The Memorial's physical uniqueness is that it is a functioning cemetery. This will undoubtedly change as fewer victims are identified—meaning at some point there will be no one left to bury. Is there room to talk about the Memorial's future without the *dženaza*? For Pestalić, July 11 will always be a day of remembrance, with or without it. It was their [the community's stakeholders as well as the Mothers'] wish that everyone could have been buried. It would have already been done if 1) more local people would come forward with information about the locations of still unexhumed mass graves as well as 2) the families would agree to bury their loved ones with whatever remains had been found.<sup>459</sup> For Karup-Druško, though, it does not matter when the burials stop because seeing the graves tells the story.<sup>460</sup>

There is also the difficult issue of trying to ascertain the identities of the bones that have been recovered but which remain in plastic bags in the morgue at the Podrinje Identification Project in Tuzla. It is financially untenable for the Bosnian federal

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<sup>457</sup> Verdery 1999, 29.

<sup>458</sup> 2014 Srebrenica Memorial fundraising outreach brochure. Burials of the dead began in 2003 with the first 600 buried in March; 282 in July; and 107 in September 2003. Each year thereafter, burials have taken place once a year on July 11: 338 bodies in 2004; 610 bodies in 2005; 505 bodies in 2006; 465 bodies in 2007; 308 bodies in 2008; 534 bodies in 2009; 775 bodies in 2010; 613 bodies in 2011; 520 bodies in 2012; 409 bodies in 2013; 175 bodies in 2014; 136 bodies in 2015; 127 bodies in 2016; 71 bodies in 2017; and 35 bodies in 2018.

<sup>459</sup> This is how the most recently discovered mass graves in Tomašica in 2013 and Koricanske Stijene in 2017 were found. Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>460</sup> Personal interview, Dženana Karup-Druško, Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016.



government to continue devoting a significant portion of its annual budget towards MPI's maintenance of the ossuaries. Matthew Holliday, Head of the ICMP's Western Balkans Program, remarked that it would very expensive and ethically wrong to troll once again through the materials. Essentially these are bits of bones that cannot be identified through DNA analysis. It is a process that also requires alerting the victim's next of kin wherever possible. Thus, continuing to treat the bones as objects subjected to repeated analysis underscores the gulf between respecting and exploiting the dead which is on full display during the commemoration.<sup>461</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> As of September 2016, there were approximately 2,000 cases of small bones that were difficult to extract DNA from nor was there sufficient funding for such an effort. Under 7,000 people had been identified and there were a total of 7,450 missing persons that MPI could successfully identify through DNA matches based on existing references. There were 300 active cases with DNA matches and burials pending. Of the other 200 active cases that had DNA matches but were either not formally identified and/or the families were not ready to bury them, there were 98 "no name" cases (where a DNA profile was generated but there was no family reference on file to make a match).<sup>461</sup> This left 120 truly active cases costing approximately 600,000 BAM annually ( $\approx$  \$360,000) to store them at the Podrinje Identification Project in Tuzla. This figure is the same amount of money that is allocated in the state budget to cover all remaining exhumations and identifications across the country. Personal interview, Matthew Holliday, ICMP, September 15, 2016. See also Buturović 2015, 101-102. On budgetary issues, see Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the UN Office at Geneva 2017. On discussions about burying unidentified remains in a single location inside the cemetery, see Wagner 2008, 201.

## Images



Figure 4.2: The national and international press surge forward as the caravan's doors are opened revealing the coffins that will be unloaded, July 9, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.3: Participants on the *marš mira*, July 8, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.4: Signage during the *marš mira* indicating the sites of former mass graves featuring Tarik Samarah's images, July 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.5: Inside the Great Hall after the coffins have been unloaded, July 9, 2015.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.6: Inside the Great Hall after the coffins have been unloaded, July 9, 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.7: The Bosnian Army preparing to greet the participants who finished the *marš mira* as they enter Potočari, July 10, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.8: Participants who finished the *marš mira* as they enter Potočari, July 10, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.9: Ceremonial transfer of the coffins from the Great Hall to the cemetery after the *marš mira* ended, July 10, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.10: Dignitaries exiting the political ceremony in the Battery Factory complex before the *dženaza* begins during the fifteen annual commemoration, July 11, 2010. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.11: The twenty-first annual Srebrenica commemoration when 127 victims were buried, July 11, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.12: The commemoration and burial service in Bratunac. Some of the tombstones in the background feature the deceased in military uniforms and/or with weapons, July 2012. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.13: Monument to fallen Bosnian Serb soldiers in WWII and the 1992-1995 Bosnian War in Kravica, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.14: Warehouse in Kravica where one of the mass executions took place; the bullet holes on the building's exterior have been patched up, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.15: Viewing screen attached to the Great Hall for attendees to watch the diplomatic ceremony taking place inside the Battery Factory during the twentieth annual commemoration, July 15, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 4.16: Bags of mortal remains and personal artifacts exhumed from the mass graves awaiting identification inside the Podrinje Identification Project facility in Tuzla, July 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 4.17: One Million Bones installation featuring plaster bones outside the Great Hall, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

The photograph shows a large sheet of paper with a list of 613 victims. The list is organized into columns with names, birth dates, and other identifying information. The names are written in a small, handwritten font, and the birth dates are written in a larger, printed font. The list is organized into columns, with names in the first column, birth dates in the second column, and other identifying information in the third column. The list is organized into columns, with names in the first column, birth dates in the second column, and other identifying information in the third column.

Figure 4.18: The list of 613 victims that were buried during the sixteen annual commemoration, July 9, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

The photograph shows a large sheet of paper with a list of 127 victims. The list is organized into columns with names, birth dates, and other identifying information. The names are written in a small, handwritten font, and the birth dates are written in a larger, printed font. The list is organized into columns, with names in the first column, birth dates in the second column, and other identifying information in the third column. The list is organized into columns, with names in the first column, birth dates in the second column, and other identifying information in the third column.

Figure 4.19: The list of 127 victims that were buried during the 21st annual commemoration, July 9, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

## **Chapter 5: The Installations—Hegemonic Narrative, Selective Voices**

Moving beyond victimhood does not mean I can't or shouldn't talk about my past. It doesn't mean I shouldn't remember. It is imperative that we remember, because without remembering there is no history, and without history we have nothing to learn.

—Kemal Pervanić

Peace activist and survivor of the Omarska concentration camp

### Where Is The Hope?

We are in a small town to meet with a community leader to discuss a local monument.<sup>462</sup> The monument's straightforward angular design juxtaposes nicely against the small bulbous rooftop spires in the background, a striking feature of Orthodox Christian churches. The towering plaque features a few hundred names of the people who died during the war; sixty-nine people were killed in this spot on a single day. As the years pass, interest in these villages has waned for they do not command the kind of attention that Srebrenica does.

"C" is walking quietly on the road and knows the man we want to meet. Upon arrival at our destination, our interviewee is nowhere to be found so C offers us some coffee and candy. After about twenty minutes, something unexpected happens: C starts to recount her story voluntarily. She had tired of talking with outsiders a long time ago after it was clear that nothing would come of it—justice never came. Yet there was something about our attention to the memorial, she says, that made her feel like sharing.

In January 1993, her grandmother was kidnapped by Orić who forced her to tell everyone in the village that they were surrounded. The elderly woman somehow managed to escape, although not everyone was as lucky. Among the dead were C's father and the rest of her family, while houses in nearby villages were razed to the ground. No one was ever convicted for the massacre. C breaks into tears and leaves the room, coming back a few minutes later.

She was in the seventh grade when this grisly mayhem began. A large and well-equipped army, including teenage men and women, robbed and pillaged the homes.

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<sup>462</sup> Personal interviews, "C," "G," and "E," August 31, 2016. I am intentionally shielding the town's name as well as the identities of these individuals.

C would later hear stories about how those who attempted to flee were slaughtered indiscriminately. More than twenty years later, she is still in agony and there is nothing she can do to ease the pain. The war forever changed her life and she is still affected by the consequences of what she saw and suffered. Again, she starts to cry.

She has no problem saying hello to her Muslim neighbors. Innocents on both sides were inexplicably killed, she says, and they still have to deal with this. People were tortured and imprisoned with all kinds of instruments in the most inhumane ways. She confides that she also stopped talking about her experiences because it usually takes her days to recover.

They never found the body of her fourteen-year-old male cousin. His parents were also slayed and the family's sole surviving eldest son somehow managed to escape. His own children, though, were also killed and are buried next to C's father. One was fatally shot; the other was wounded and later died in the hospital. The old people were also murdered. The village was surrounded by a huge army that just massacred people. Some survivors were to be exchanged but this never happened—they were slain. The bones of the dead, including her brother's, are still missing.

C crosses her arms when Srebrenica comes up and here she poses the familiar question: if the enclave was a demilitarized zone, how come “they” had so much equipment? In 1993, Srebrenica was already protected so people in her community were surprised that the ABiH could enter their villages with this amount of weaponry. C explains that even after suffering these degradations, the VRS never thought about slaughtering small children, women, and the elderly in retaliation—they were sent away in 1995. The VRS only killed the soldiers that were involved, she says.

C rattles off the names of other villages in the area that were destroyed. Before the conflict, this village was the center of another *opština*. It lost its regional importance afterwards and was folded into Srebrenica. Initially, only journalists from the RS were interested in the “story,” but that slowed to a trickle. Now, maybe a reporter will show up during the commemoration but people are tired, she says, because no one is listening.

At some point, C’s male colleague, “G,” enters the room. G is more formal yet exudes a sense of quietness. He says that many things have been pushed under the carpet and that no one, including the international community, wants to talk about their (Bosnian Serb) truths for fear of further harming the Bošniak community. According to G, it is not that difficult to understand what has happened if you want the truth. For example, the Mothers of Srebrenica hug Orić because he is their hero and protector. Bosnian Serb mothers, though, are denied their voice to speak out about their own suffering and losses.

“What is the hope for the future without talking about this?” he asks.

There is a hand-drawn map of the *opština* under a thick glass panel covering the desk with the names of numerous villages. As if on cue, G starts reciting which ones are Bosnian Serb, Bošniak, or mixed, without a trace of malice in his voice. For the better part of an hour, the tone has been tranquil despite the painful content of the conversation. There is no hate being espoused and no aggressive genocide denial. C has repeated a couple of familiar assertions, however, this is common amongst survivors of all kinds.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Over time, survivors hear each other’s stories and inevitably begin to incorporate some of the same sentiments regardless whether they personally experienced those specific details or not. This is also case with some of the Bošniak survivors I have spoken with and one part of how the broader narratives are constructed, refined, and cemented over time. See E. Zerubavel 2011, 222.



These are regular people who have suffered terribly and their voices deserve to be heard, although it seems nearly impossible that this will ever happen.

The energy of the room changes dramatically upon the arrival of my interviewee. “E” is a hyper and agitated chap who is not only the head of the utilities office, but also the village’s political boss. Plainly speaking, he is the local powerbroker who doles out the jobs. As soon as he walks in, both C and G stiffen up and our conversation grinds to a halt. The tension escalates in the room as E declares that he wanted to meet with me so that I could learn the truth.

What follows is a ninety-minute monologue that is at points unintelligible, racist, and paranoid, peppered with claims of fierce genocide denial. E’s speech includes numerous references to WWII as well as the politics of then Yugoslavia when, he claims, the Bośniaks controlled everything, including the local roads. All throughout there is a single theme: Bosnian Serbs have been treated unfairly. They bear blame for the war and carnage while having suffered thousands of unrecognized civilian casualties. All the hallmarks of the well-rehearsed story of justification come into full view.

E also is apparently misrepresenting the facts, according to my translator. She has been trying in vain to arrange meetings with other Bosnian Serbs who are more balanced for this very reason. A tense five-minute argument ensues in which she accuses him of deliberately lying. This exchange ends when she proclaims,

“He just told me that I am naïve and will be the first one to die in the next war.”

E quickly brushes aside questions about the monument; it was built in 2005 by a steering committee comprised of war veterans. There are many such memorials (*spomen ploče*) in other Bosnian Serb villages, he says, but they are destroyed almost as quickly as

they are erected. Throughout the interview, people come in and out of the office. E puts another older male employee on the spot, insisting that the gentleman explain how his family was murdered. This man looks exasperated, politely saying he has no interest in retelling his story but that it is online somewhere, at which point he excuses himself.

The interview with E underscores that there are powerful and mostly male Bosnian Serb memory gatekeepers whose narratives of denial shape much of the local discourse. Because many hold positions of political and economic power, they effectively silence individuals wishing to speak out. These men offer a striking contrast to Srebrenica's mostly female survivors who are equally influential. Make no mistake: there are political machinations taking place in terms of narrative construction on the Bošniak side as well.

Something else stands out. When the name of this village and others like it come up in the literature, they are described as the locations of self-defensive attacks made by the ABiH. These skirmishes are characterized as food raids, conducted against well-stocked Bosnian Serb villages because Srebrenica's Bošniak population was starving to death. The deaths of Bosnian Serbs are classified as the unfortunate outcomes of these forays—even though these were not always entirely peaceful and sometimes involved thousands of Bošniak “bag people” (*torbari*).<sup>464</sup> Exactly seven sentences are devoted to this specific topic in the Memorial's latest exhibition (Figure 5.1).<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Sudetic 1998, 157.

<sup>465</sup> “A” mentions Ibran Mustafić, one of the men originally involved with the Memorial's foundation. Mustafić was an ABiH soldier and is now a prominent Bošniak politician. He wrote a highly controversial book, *Planirani Haos 1990-1996 (Planned Chaos 1990-1996)*, about Orić's war crimes, amongst other equally explosive claims. Another Bosnian Serb interviewee during an off-the-record discussion showed me a copy of it. One of the more disturbing moments during my research occurred when my Bosnian Serb translator mentioned Mustafić's name to a prominent Bošniak activist and survivor—a man who graciously granted us a lengthy interview a few days before. At first I did not fully grasp that they were arguing until I noticed the heated tones of their voices. Mustafić's name also came up in interviews with some Bosnian Serb politicians woven



Figure 5.1: Placard inside the Dutch Exhibit discussing the food raids, 2017.  
Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

“In 1992, just one single UNHCR humanitarian aid convoy was allowed to enter Srebrenica and deliver a few kilograms of food per person. In order to survive under these harsh circumstances, the people of Srebrenica were forced to launch foraging missions, or “actions,” in the area around the enclave.

Groups of armed defenders from Srebrenica, led by Commander Naser Orić, joined forces with others from the nearby enclaves to raid villages in the area. Some of these villages had been inhabited by Serbs, and some had been more ethnically mixed villages prior to the Serb aggression.

However, the ethnically mixed villages had been ‘cleansed’ by the Serb armed forces in 1992. At great risk, the defenders and civilians captured food, weapons and ammunition. Thousands of desperate and hungry people followed the armed defenders in these ‘actions’.”

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As transitional justice mechanisms, atrocity site memorials may provide the aggrieved community with a public acknowledgement of what and how they suffered.

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into their genocide denial claims as proof of a Bošniak cover-up. On Mustafić, see Bougarel 2012, 111 and Nettelfield 2010, 104.

These sites offer victims and survivors a platform for their voices to be heard as a form of symbolic reparations to ensure that their experiences are not forgotten. The silence about the crimes at the individual and communal levels are openly displayed through exhibitions, physical documentation, and symbolic architectural design (depending upon the nature of the memorial). In doing so, these sites provide visitors with the opportunity to bear witness as well as to learn about what transpired.

If these memorials serve to acknowledge what happened to victims and survivors, it is *their* narrative of events that would logically take prominence within the exhibitions. However, when these same sites are also considered educational institutions, there is the question of how much of the broader historical context should be reflected within the installations. The tension between representing memory and history is even more fraught when the tragedy being memorialized remains controversial nationally as well as within the local community where the site is located. The National September 11 Memorial Museum in the US, as well as innumerable Holocaust memorials in Germany and Poland, for example, reflect the challenges of erecting sites that commemorate the victims of horrific tragedies within highly politicized contexts.

While survivors and family members are important stakeholders, other equally powerful voices, such as government representatives, religious leaders, and memorialization experts, amongst others, may also have a say in what happens at the site, especially when it comes to its funding, location, and design. When members of the perpetrating community are also involved, questions about how the atrocity is described as well as which aspects are highlighted versus jettisoned impact the exhibitions. Even amongst the survivors, some individuals serve as the most visible representatives for the

group. A hierarchy of voices may exist amongst them, creating additional tensions about whose specific stories should be highlighted. These memory politics are reflected throughout the exhibitions. Who retains authority and ownership over the site? Whose narrative should be reflected? How much historical context should be included?

I argue that the transitional justice paradigm needs to be more realistic about the complex mnemonic challenges involved in generating exhibitions at atrocity site memorials if they are to function as both reparative and educational mechanisms. The Srebrenica Memorial reflects all of these pressures with an additional complication: it is an externally-imposed initiative within a highly antagonistic territory whose leadership was browbeaten into allowing it to exist. However, as the OHR's influence and international community's interest wane, the site's stakeholders have wielded greater authority over how the genocide's memory is portrayed there.

This chapter opens with a brief description of the Battery Factory's three exhibitions. In the second part, I analyze the underlying dynamics leading to the competing narratives that are on display as well as the challenges in determining whose truth is reflected on the walls. In the third section, I look at how the production of identities, filtered through a strict binary between good and evil as well as the privileging of high profile survivors' voices, reinforces Srebrenica's hegemonic narrative of victimization. Finally, I discuss the temporal implications of creating a memorial tasked with memorializing July 1995.

### **The Exhibitions**

The Battery Factory complex is comprised of several buildings and warehouses. The first set are the administrative buildings, three attached and (mostly) interconnected structures located near the property's entrance (Figure 5A.1). These contain a rapidly

deteriorating two-level former medical wing where some of the most lecherous sexual graffiti is located (Figure 5A.2). Currently, one part of this wing is where the Memorial's general library and conference rooms are located. Attached to the medical wing is the five-floor structure where some of the peacekeepers slept and ate as well as entertained themselves.<sup>466</sup> These floors now contain the working offices for the Memorial's staff and three associations of Mothers.

A separate two-story structure sitting immediately behind the administrative building is the former communications center. It has been extensively renovated and contains the newest exhibition financed and created by the Dutch entitled "*Srebrenički genocid—neuspjeh međunarodne zajednice*" ("Srebrenica Genocide—The Failure of the International Community"/Dutch Exhibit) (Figure 5A.3). A smaller freestanding structure attached to it houses the *SENSE Documentacioni Centar Srebrenica* (SENSE Documentation Center Srebrenica; SENSE Center).

A massive warehouse (Warehouse) sits a few meters away from the medical wing; it includes three primary spaces and significant parts of it are in vital need of repair (Figure 5A.4). The biggest one contains Tito-era signage and is large enough to drive trucks inside (Figure 5A.5). The second space contains long rectangular areas where minimal light seeps in (Figure 5A.6).<sup>467</sup> Vast portions of the Warehouse attached to this space remain unused and/or are off-limits to most visitors. The narrower portion connects to the third area which functions as the primary exhibition room: the *Spomen Soba Srebrenica*

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<sup>466</sup> The other housing facilities were temporary structures erected on the large grass area in front of the warehouses which were removed when UNPROFOR departed from the area. See Nuhanović 2007, 348.

<sup>467</sup> This is where many academic conferences are held; it also doubled as the diplomatic presentation stage for the 2015 commemoration.

(Srebrenica Memorial Room; Spomen Soba). Towards the far end of the Warehouse's exterior is another smaller derelict two-level structure with heavily rusted industrial machinery exposed to the weather (Figure 5A.7). Finally, in front of the Spomen Soba sits another single-level storage facility: the Great Hall where the July 9 and 10 commemorative events take place (Figure 5A.8).

### *The SENSE Center*

Opened in 2014, the SENSE Center is a multimedia research room created in partnership with the SENSE Transitional Justice Center in The Hague (Figure 5B.1).<sup>468</sup> Orlović told me that it is the single most important room on the entire property because it contains all the indisputable facts about the genocide.<sup>469</sup> It is a fully renovated space that doubles as a small exhibition, relying exclusively on the trove of genocide-related materials, including over 1,000 hours of testimonies, videos, and other recordings in addition to photographs and documentation gathered by the ICTY.<sup>470</sup>

The SENSE Center is accessible with advance notice and is generally not seen by individual visitors. The space is closely monitored since it houses twelve computer terminals as well as eight individual television screens (Figure 5B.2). Despite the lock on the door, it is designed to shed physical light upon factual proof conveying themes of justice, democracy, due process, and order.<sup>471</sup> The individual monitors inside the SENSE Center highlight key milestones that occurred during a single week, July 11 through July

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<sup>468</sup> The SENSE Agency has been reporting on the ICTY, ICJ, and the International Criminal Court since 1998. See <https://www.sense-agency.com/sense.5.html>. Accessed February 10, 2018.

<sup>469</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

<sup>470</sup> SENSE-Srebrenica Documentation Center information card (undated). The SENSE Center contains an online companion exhibit entitled, *Srebrenica: Genocide in Eight Acts* that chronicles the massacre's unfolding, including a range of legal and visual exhibits as well as primary source documentation. See <http://srebrenica.sense-agency.com/en/>. Accessed July 1, 2018.

<sup>471</sup> Hinton 2018, 16.

16, 1995, using materials from the nine Srebrenica-specific trials (Figure 5B.3).<sup>472</sup> The exhibition's centerpiece is a video wall screening a fifteen minute overview of the genocide's unfolding (Figure 5B.4). The SENSE Center not intended to provide the historical context of the events leading up to the genocide and remains separate from the Memorial's research library.<sup>473</sup>

### *The Spomen Soba*

The Spomen Soba officially opened on July 9, 2007 and was designed in partnership with Suzanne Bardgett from the UK's Imperial War Museum as well as Aida Daidžić, the lead designer for the Sarajevo-based architectural OSNAP (Figure 5C.1).<sup>474</sup> It includes two towering "black boxes" that nearly reach the space's high ceiling (Figure 5C.2). These boxes are juxtaposed against an environment dominated by pockmarked walls with spots of the sky peeking through holes in the roof. It is unclear how or when this room was damaged—especially whether it was in this condition before the war, was incurred during the conflict, or is the remnant of a poorly maintained structure collapsing under its own weight. There is no mention that this is the space where the 5-6,000 women and children who were let into the base gathered.<sup>475</sup> Massive unused industrial machinery occupies one quarter of the room.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> The ICTY's website has a full page devoted to the Srebrenica genocide. See ICTY. "ICTY Remembers: The Srebrenica Genocide 1995-2015."

<http://www.icty.org/specials/srebrenica20/index.html>. Accessed February 23, 2018.

<sup>473</sup> This was constructed in 2014, but as of 2016 did not have any holdings.

<sup>474</sup> Over one half of the £138,000 budget was provided by the British government with the Memorial's Foundation as well as other donors picking up the rest of the tab (Bardgett 2005).

<sup>475</sup> Nuhanović 2007, 348.

<sup>476</sup> For more information on the *Spomen Soba*'s original design plans, see OSNAP Open South North Architecture Practice ZT GmbH. <http://osnap.at/project-list/public-urban/srebrenica-memorial-room-museum/#>. Accessed January 6, 2018.



One of the black boxes is a screening area where the twenty-seven minute documentary film, *Srebrenica, July 1995* is shown intermittently. Produced in 1999, it features international news footage from the enclave's siege along with interviews from survivors, including Hasan.<sup>477</sup> The other black box features biographies of twenty victims which were written by Suljagić.<sup>478</sup> Each includes the victim's picture as well as a personal artifact recovered during the exhumations (Figures 5C.3 & 5C.4).<sup>479</sup> Despite the large windows on the left wall that bathe the room in light, the atmosphere feels dark and heavy, conveying the symbolic weight of the genocide's emotional and physical toll. In 2005, as work was getting underway, Bardgett explained that,

Daidžić felt strongly that the structure [of black boxes] should be made from one material, and in one colour. A strong, simple statement which would act as a vehicle for the story-telling elements. For her the showcases speak of the lives that are gone. They are the only source of light within the Memorial Room (apart from the film) and their symbolism is obvious.<sup>480</sup>

Eleven years on, the black box installations need updates, both in terms of new content, research, and developments for the film as well as refurbishments to the biographical presentations. While the black boxes dominate the space, visitors do not necessarily approach them first. Instead, many people begin looking at the presentation and information boards that begin on the wall to their immediate left upon entry. Sometime after 2007 and up until 2013, the walls featured small pictures containing

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<sup>477</sup> The film was produced by the Bosnian filmmaker, Muhamed Mujkić, in partnership with the directors of the BBC documentary, *Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave*. See Remembering Srebrenica's website. <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/resources/research-resources/film-theatre/srebrenica-cry-grave/>. Accessed January 6, 2018.

<sup>478</sup> Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016. See also Bardgett 2007 and Nettelfield and Wagner 2014, 285.

<sup>479</sup> Its purpose was to feature short stories of the deceased to show that they lived normal lives before they were swept away in the genocide. Personal interview, Amra Čelebić, formerly with OHR, September 7, 2016.

<sup>480</sup> Bardgett 2005.

images of Srebrenica's fleeing refugees as well as small copy boards about the genocide that were poorly translated into English (Figure 5C.5). Until 2010, a large banner featuring contrasting imagery of the mass grave exhumations and Kamp Westerbork hung on the large pipping structure outside the Spomen Soba (Figure 5C.6).<sup>481</sup>

In advance of the twentieth anniversary in 2015, a newer presentation entitled, "*Srebrenica, 'Zaštićena zona UN-a' 1995-2015 Izložba*" ("Srebrenica, UN Safe Zone, 1995-2015, Exhibition") was installed. Haris Pašović conceived of the exhibition, the majority of which is based on wartime photographs and artistic representations of the genocide's aftermath (Figures 5C.7 & 5C.8). Bosnian artists on display include Zejo Gafić's photographs of objects found in the mass graves and Šejla Kamerić's "Bosnian Girl."<sup>482</sup> There are also photographs during and after the war as well as of the mass grave exhumations, Dutchbat graffiti, and commemoration by Samarah, Dado Ruvić, Darko Bandić, and Ron Haviv, amongst others. Some feature brief captions while others solely list artistic credit. There is an emphasis on the use of images to convey the pain, shock, and horror of the war's brutality (Figure 5C.9).

This imagery is supplemented by three other groups of informational material, the first of which line the left wall that visitors encounter upon entry. These feature the

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<sup>481</sup> According to Suljagić, this banner was originally intended to help visitors and survivors put Srebrenica into a greater historical context vis-à-vis the Holocaust. Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016.

<sup>482</sup> "Bosnian Girl" is a black and white photograph of the artist juxtaposed with graffiti left by Dutchbat on the walls of the Battery Factory. It reads, "No teeth...? A mustache...? Smel [sic] like shit...? Bosnian Girl!" When it debuted in 2003, many people nationally and internationally did not realize where this graffiti came from, mistakenly assuming that Kamerić had created it. The piece exposed some of the racist and misogynist attitudes of Dutchbat troops stationed in Srebrenica. At that time, the Dutch government was still reeling from the 2002 NIOD Report which revealed the country's failure to protect Srebrenica's refugees. The piece also called attention to uncomfortable gender-specific issues that Srebrenica's wartime female population experienced, much of which still remains taboo. See Helms 2012 and Rizvic 2015.

headshots of seventeen Srebrenica war criminals convicted by the ICTY, with the word “guilty” in white paper hand affixed diagonally over each face (Figure 5C.10).<sup>483</sup> These headshots are followed by the second set of information boards: three large copy-heavy posters, one of which features text from the judgement summary of the Vujadin Popović case.<sup>484</sup> The two other boards in this group (in both English and Bosnian) feature brief excerpts from the Krstić case as well as three short quotes from the victims’ testimonies (Figure 5C.11). The third set of informational materials are six boards towards the back. Four of these explain through words and pictures the complicated process of DNA-led identification (Figure 5C.12). Two more in this group detail the legal process and various agencies involved in finding missing persons, again in both languages.

A separate set of unmarked rooms exists to the right of the entrance containing the small “Everyday Srebrenica” exhibit, also prepared for the 2015 commemoration. It features short biographies and photos of some of Srebrenica’s residents talking about contemporary life in the town. The rest of the rooms in this area are left empty and/or are used for random storage even though they contain very faded graffiti.

### *The Dutch Exhibit*

The Dutch Exhibit opened in early February 2017 and was financed almost exclusively by the Dutch government with support from its Bosnian embassy along with PAX and Kamp Westerbork.<sup>485</sup> The exhibit is in the newly renovated former

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<sup>483</sup> Back in 2016, “guilty” was not yet taped onto the faces of Mladić and Karadžić.

<sup>484</sup> The Popović trial focused on seven of the genocide’s high level commanders. Both Vujadin Popović and Ljubiša Beara were convicted of committing genocide. ICTY. “Case Information Sheet “Srebrenica” (IT-05-08) Popović Et Al.”

<sup>485</sup> See Footnote 286 for the exhibition’s costs. Additional documentation was provided by the Dutch Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. See PAX. “Former Dutchbat Headquarters in Srebrenica to Become a Museum.” July 4, 2014. <https://www.paxforpeace.nl/stay->

communications center and is considered part of the Memorial's second phase of development (Figure 5D.1).<sup>486</sup> There were four main objectives:

- 1) Restoration of the former Dutchbat HQ, at the former Potočari compound;
- 2) Reconstruction of a watchtower at the Potočari compound and one of the Dutchbat OPs (observation posts);
- 3) Capacity building for the Memorial Center's board and staff and the associations of survivors of Srebrenica; and
- 4) Content for the reconstructed Dutchbat HQ: collection of photos and statements of Dutchbat veterans, and an exhibition on the international presence in Srebrenica.<sup>487</sup>

Twice as large as the Spomen Soba in terms of floor space and substance (120,000 square meters) and spanning numerous rooms on two floors, it is the most comprehensive accounting of Srebrenica's story at the site (Figures 5D.2, 5D.3a, 5D.3b & 5D.3c). The exhibit includes extensive photographs, military records, written documentation, video footage, audio recordings, and survivor testimonies of the conditions in the enclave from 1992 onward; the events of July 1995; the genocide's aftermath; and the ICTY trials.

### **Conflicting Narratives**

Atrocity site memorials invoke powerful, often visceral, emotions and reactions. Nor do these crimes happen in isolation; they are intimately connected to the melding of complicated political, economic, cultural, and historical factors. There are also different levels of criminal responsibility and perpetration that could range, for example, from state and local level complicity to individuals and groups who act in consonance or independently. Victims and survivors internalize their individual experiences of the violence in different ways even when they are targeted collectively and are subject to

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[informed/news/former-Dutchbat-headquarters-in-srebrenica-to-become-a-museum](#). Accessed January 6, 2018.

<sup>486</sup> The first phase was the completion of the cemetery as well as the creation of the Spomen Soba, both of which the Dutch were also involved with as early as 1999.

<sup>487</sup> PAX. "The Program: The Dutch Contribution to the Potočari Memorial Centre Second Phase." See <https://www.potocarimc.org/index.php/component/k2/item/72-a-brief-overview-of-the-project-of-the-restoration-of-the-former-dutchbat-hq-building>. Accessed February 23, 2018.

similar kinds of violence. There is a continuum of people affected by the atrocity: those who have been subjected to this violence; committed the crime; created the conditions for it to occur; and/or silently stood by. This means that there are also different interpretations of exactly what, how, and why it happened as well as who is to blame.

As transitional justice mechanisms, atrocity site memorials focus more on repair, education, and collective memory rather than punishment.<sup>488</sup> Bickford argues that, unlike traditional museums and classrooms, these memorials offer a unique opportunity to teach about violent histories, societal change, and conflict prevention because they harness visitors' empathy of the "suffering of fellow human beings" where the crimes occurred.<sup>489</sup> How the tragedy is narrated throughout the exhibition's design is fraught because it involves another set of actors who have a stake in how it is represented.

Sturken, for example, writes about the highly politicized process involved in creating the National September 11 Memorial Museum (9/11 Museum) which opened in 2014, following six years of negotiations. The result is a jumbled exposition that is equal parts exhibition hall and tourist attraction, including a gift shop that angered the victims' families.<sup>490</sup> The museum portion is located beneath the memorial plaza which is dominated by two massive fountains and reflecting pools featuring the victims' names where the buildings once stood. She notes that in the underground exhibition,

One can read in the tentativeness of its narrative that it was in its design beholden to a large number of political interests and interest groups, including family members of those who died, public servants, and donors, and that it is the result of design by committee in ways that were inevitable.<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Torpey 2003, 7.

<sup>489</sup> Bickford 2014, 496.

<sup>490</sup> The average adult admission price for the underground museum is \$24 although it is free for the victims' families. For more information on the site, see the National September 11 Memorial Museum's website. <https://www.911memorial.org>. Accessed June 28, 2018.

<sup>491</sup> Sturken 2015, 475.

There are several disparate narratives that are woven throughout the exhibition but which do not create a single coherent story to unite the entire experience. These strands include the stories of the dead; the experiences of those who survived; the symbolic meaning of 9/11; the disaster's political precedents and implications; and its impact upon American identity.<sup>492</sup> Because the 9/11 attacks were seen by millions of people around the world, Sodaro argues that the museum's inclusion of hundreds of eye witness accounts inadvertently creates a somewhat homogenized accounting of the day.<sup>493</sup>

The 9/11 Museum's stakeholders eventually decided that its narrative would begin the moment the first building was hit at 8:46am.<sup>494</sup> While I will return to the temporal complications associated with this decision later in the chapter, it does point to one huge difference between the 9/11 and Srebrenica tragedies: the former was a terrorist attack designed to kill people indiscriminately while the latter was a genocide with the intent purpose of eradicating Bośniak life in the Podrinje.<sup>495</sup>

For some survivors I spoke with, such as Emin, the story of what happened during the Srebrenica genocide starts and ends in the graveyard.<sup>496</sup> If you do venture from the cemetery across the road, you might spot the Spomen Soba's sign and large metal door that sit at the end of a concrete path. In addition, because the entrances to the cemetery

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<sup>492</sup> Sturken 2015, 474-475, 480-481, 483, 486.

<sup>493</sup> Sodaro 2018, 157.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> The crime of genocide legally hinges upon the perpetrator's "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." United Nations. "UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide." [http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1\\_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf). Accessed June 28, 2018.

<sup>496</sup> Personal interview, "Emin," age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

and the Spomen Soba are positioned across the highway from each other, the latter will likely remain the workhorse exhibition for the foreseeable future.

There are many assumptions taken for granted inside. For example, it is presumed that everyone knows what the ICTY is or what the crime of genocide means (much less what differentiates it from, say, ethnic cleansing). There is the expectation that visitors understand sophisticated concepts related to the UN (e.g., its function, what peacekeeping mandates mean, and the significance of UNSC resolutions) as well as that they are familiar with the basic facts of the 1992-1995 Bosnian War and its historical antecedents.

Between the SENSE Center's objective representation of the facts and the Spomen Soba's visually scattered depiction of the genocide and its aftermath, sits the Dutch Exhibit. It features three intersecting "storylines" (Figure 5D.4). The first is "functional," focusing on the recreation of important rooms where key decisions were made. These are mostly related to the Dutchbat narrative. The second storyline is "chronological" which tells the story of the Srebrenica genocide; this is based on the narrative of survivors. Most of the "chronological" content came directly from the Advisory Working Group and Dutch stakeholders, with Hasan acting as the primary liaison.<sup>497</sup> The third storyline is "personal," following a young man who was killed in the genocide as well as his mother's subsequent struggle to find his remains.

The Dutch Exhibit meticulously documents the genocide's unfolding using incredible detail across a range of media, but why exactly was the communications center recreated? Access to it was generally limited to Karremans, Deputy Commander Robert Franken, and the battalion staff. Most of these rooms were created almost exclusively from

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<sup>497</sup> Personal interview, Amra Fazlić-Begić, Director of Tourism, Srebrenica Memorial, August 24, 2016.

memory and period photos (Figures 5D.5 & 5D.6). Although key decisions were undertaken in some of them, others are recognized mostly for their markings. For example, the fact that the “Bosnian Girl” graffiti appears in the sleeping area reserved for key personnel in the communications center is particularly revealing for it, along with other similar illustrations, likely set the tone for the entire base.<sup>498</sup>

The entire installation was also written by a Dutch speaking historian who was not an expert on Srebrenica nor the Bosnian War, creating some friction about the content of the 2016 test room exhibition.<sup>499</sup> The families were unhappy with the *marš smrti* presentation boards which contained factual errors as well as inaccurate characterizations of what happened throughout it. There were also translation issues with the Bosnian and English copy, the latter of which was resolved before the exhibit officially opened by an American academic who is a Srebrenica activist and has close ties to the Memorial. He also shaped part of the exhibition’s overall narrative, including referring to the conflict as a “war of aggression” waged by Serbia (Figure 5D.7).<sup>500</sup> There is a larger question about the Memorial’s ability to serve as a site of education when this kind of partisan language is featured, however subtle it may be to visitors.<sup>501</sup> As Ashplant et al. point out,

The conflict over language in such cases is always an element in a broader struggle over the representation of the use of armed force: a struggle to make particular meanings effectively dominant, so as to secure legitimacy for ‘our’ violence whilst rendering that of the enemy illegitimate.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> A point that came out of a discussion with Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

<sup>499</sup> Marketa Slavkova, an anthropologist working in the Srebrenica *opština* for over five years, photographed the complete exhibition soon after its opening in 2017 (approximately 500 images in total) to aid my analysis.

<sup>500</sup> The Bosnian War is referred to as the “war of aggression” throughout the exhibition.

<sup>501</sup> The American academic responsible for the English translations told me in an off-the-record conversation he provided a list of revisions to the Dutch team earlier in 2018. Whether these will be implemented remains to be seen nor was I privy to exactly what copy changes he requested.

<sup>502</sup> Ashplant et al. 2000, 54-55.



### *Navigating the Truth*

The narrative across the Memorial's permanent exhibitions hinges upon three themes: innocent Bošniak civilians suffered unspeakable horrors; genocidal Bosnian Serb military brass and soldiers orchestrated and committed the atrocities; and the disinterested international community abandoned Srebrenica. While there were different groups involved in the creation of each of the exhibitions, the Memorial's survivor stakeholders, with the Mothers at the helm, provided final approval. Even with the addition of the SENSE Center and the Dutch Exhibit, this triangular story still rings true. To a large extent, that is squarely because it is the truth. It is the way the truth is expressed that is much more complicated. The site is also not just a static monument to a past horror; it was conceived as a transitional justice mechanism, thus functioning as a site of knowledge of production as well as reparation.

If the collective memory of the genocide is carefully oriented around interwoven proclamations of Bošniak nationalism and religious rhetoric that reach a crescendo on July 11, it is on the Memorial's walls where the site's stakeholders reinforce it. Y. Zerubavel argues that collective memory solidifies a group's "distinct" identity that enables it to differentiate itself from other communities. This singularity is evoked when other groups attempt to deny its existence and "legitimacy."<sup>503</sup> She notes that

Drawing upon selective criteria, collective memory divides the past into major stages, reducing complex historical events to basic plot structures. The power of collective memory does not lie in its accurate, systematic, or sophisticated mapping of the past, but in establishing basic images that articulate and reinforce a particular ideological stance.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995, 8.

<sup>504</sup> Ibid.

This power is used a tool to fundamentally shape how the past is remembered, which plays a direct role in determining what the “official” truth is. The battle over Srebrenica’s memory is inherently messy. In the absence of any formal state responsibility for the crime nor any national law inhibiting genocide denial, Bosnian Serb stakeholders proactively refute the extensive criminal and legal evidence proving what happened. This is the opposite of how post-WWII Germany was forced to address its collective guilt and responsibility through educational programs, institutional reforms, and criminal laws that dealt with its past, also known as *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. This followed a broader set of post-conflict mechanisms the Allies put in place, including de-Nazification as well as the thirteen trials that comprised the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg.<sup>505</sup> In Srebrenica’s case, there has been no such national reckoning as the RS, rather than being charged with criminal responsibility, was awarded the territory it cleansed. Because each ethnic group asserts its own platform of victimization and interpretation of the war, the ICTY trials have also become the de facto historical record, even though this was not part of its mandate.<sup>506</sup> These issues have colluded in creating an assault on what constitutes the truth.

This notion of there being multiple perspectives on the genocide but only one “truth” was voiced frequently in my discussions. For some, it was the survivors’ truth above all else. Munira, for example, firmly believes that the “real” truth is needed to order to create

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<sup>505</sup> See United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Encyclopedia, “International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.” <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007069>. Accessed June 29, 2018.

<sup>506</sup> For a discussion on the challenges of using legal testimony and evidence as the primary basis for the historical record, see Delpha et al. 2012, 1-22.

“real” trust between all people.<sup>507</sup> A few interviewees wondered why the Mothers felt as though the truth could hurt them. For others, it was the truth as proven by the ICTY. The Memorial serves as the canvas of these memory politics. As Saliha Džuderija, the then Assistant Minister for Human Rights and Memorial board member, told me,

Of course, [the Srebrenica Memorial] has to give the full truth about Srebrenica, even when it comes to [Bosnian] Serbs and other nationalities. That is not a question. Of course, Srebrenica is devoted to the victims of genocide, which are Bošniaks. But in the museum the whole story has to be told, with facts. [However], as long as those political elite hold the community divided, you do not have the whole picture.<sup>508</sup>

Manipulating the truth only worsens the situation, according to Dion van den Berg, a longtime Dutch activist with PAX, all the more so when it includes extremely one-sided interpretations and/or nationalist narratives.<sup>509</sup> One of the representatives from OHR commented how these kinds of established narratives influence people’s own memories, which they then modify, including things that they may not have experienced directly.<sup>510</sup> According to Montville, when a group has been selected out for mass atrocities, the experience can “produce a victimhood psychology based on group memory of the violent loss.”<sup>511</sup> In the case of Srebrenica there seems to be little tolerance to deviate from the narrative of victimhood which spotlights the innocence of all Bošniaks to the point where it seems as though everyone was a passive victim devoid of any agency.

Frustration with the entrenched mentality of victimization in Srebrenica was palpable throughout many of my interviews with both activists and survivors. Survivors are

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<sup>507</sup> Personal interview, Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, August 15, 2016.

<sup>508</sup> Personal interview, Saliha Džuderija, former Board Member and then Assistant Minister for Human Rights, Bosnia, August 27, 2011.

<sup>509</sup> Phone interview, Dion van den Berg, PAX, September 5, 2016.

<sup>510</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR, September 1, 2016.

<sup>511</sup> Montville 2006, 132.

expected to tow the party line when it comes to how they express themselves lest they be judged by the Mothers—a sentiment a few of my contacts expressed in confidence. There is power to be had in manipulating victims, Jadranka Miličević, Fondacija CURE’s Executive Director told me, so when you exercise your own agency you cannot be controlled.<sup>512</sup> Those who try to break out of having their primary identity defined as a Srebrenica survivor face push back and rejection.

Self-identification as a victim of genocide is encouraged to the point where the term has been watered down. The authenticity of their individual experiences and feelings, according to Alma Mašić, the former head of Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) in Bosnia, are overshadowed when that label, which has its own specific associations, is applied.<sup>513</sup> Most people can claim being a survivor of the war in some capacity which dilutes its meaning, according to Murat Tahirović, who heads up the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide.<sup>514</sup> Moll spoke of a continuum ranging from being a literal survivor of killings in a particular spot to a survivor by chance as a member of the targeted community who was not physically present when killings were taking place.<sup>515</sup> A close friend shared his own frustration. He said that the Mothers’ experience of survival diverges significantly from his own—that of an animal being hunted down in the mountains.

Emir Nukić, a longtime civil society activist working in Srebrenica, relayed it succinctly: the survivors (of all three ethnic groups) are being victimizing again with the

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<sup>512</sup> Personal interview, Jadranka Miličević, Fondacija CURE, August 12, 2016.

<sup>513</sup> Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

<sup>514</sup> Personal interview, Murat Tahirović, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

<sup>515</sup> Personal interview, Nicolas Moll, memorialization expert, August 3, 2016.

narratives being imposed upon them.<sup>516</sup> For example, the label of “Bosnian Muslim people” is used as a war symbol, according to Kerim, encouraging a “we were victims” mentality that implores others to “treat me differently.”<sup>517</sup> He said it is pointless to criticize the Memorial even though he does not agree with its official message. A different approach is needed, Tokača said, one that begins with what kind of memory do “we” want to have?<sup>518</sup> Is the content of “our” memory fiction or reality? He emphasized the country’s need to document history as it actually happened, otherwise new myths and controversies are continually replicated, a perennial issue throughout the Balkans.<sup>519</sup>

### **Us versus Them**

The use of victimization is a powerful card played by all parties in the post-conflict environment. One horror of ethnic conflict is that both sides include victims and perpetrators, leaving no clear designation between winners and losers.<sup>520</sup> Viejo-Rose argues that a politicized post-war landscape becomes immersed in a historical narrative emphasizing “the heroic, self-sacrificing martyrs defending ‘us’ versus the murderous hordes comprising ‘them.’”<sup>521</sup>

The fraught memorialization of genocide at an atrocity site memorial, especially in traversing the complex terrain of addressing perpetration and victimhood, is not unique to Srebrenica. A look at the Auschwitz-Birkenau’s website is telling. Under the name of the site it says “Former German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp,” making it

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<sup>516</sup> Personal interview, Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

<sup>517</sup> Personal interview, “Kerim,” age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>518</sup> Personal interview, Mirsad Tokača, RDC, August 9, 2016.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> Estrada-Hollenbeck 2001, 71.

<sup>521</sup> Viejo-Rose 2011, 55.

clear that this site is not of Polish origin.<sup>522</sup> In Poland, Auschwitz is a literal reference to the memorial while Oświęcim refers to the Polish town where the camp is located. These two names, though, have much bigger symbolic and nationalist meanings.<sup>523</sup>

The Polish narrative of what happened at Auschwitz-Birkenau is complicated since the site is home to both the largest Jewish and Polish cemeteries in the world.<sup>524</sup> In the Polish pavilion at the memorial, however, the narrative focuses on German occupation of the country.<sup>525</sup> Zubrzycki argues that this is due, in part, to the former Communist government's defining Polish identity along "civic" lines. As a result, "Jewish victims from Poland thus became "Polish citizens," and their number was conflated with that of "ethnic Poles.""<sup>526</sup> However, Poland has sought to distance itself from its own complicity in the murders of Polish Jews during and after WWII (e.g., the pogroms in Jedwabne in 1941 and Kielce in 1946). This competitive victimization stems, in part, from both people's complicated experiences of expulsion, domination, and erasure at various points that are lodged in each group's collective memory. According to Young,

The significant place of national martyrdom in the histories and identities of both Poles and Jews further complicates the delicate memorial equation in Poland.

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<sup>522</sup> During WWII, the camp was actually located on Polish territory that was annexed by the Nazis (referred to as the General Government district). See also Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum. <http://auschwitz.org/en/>. Accessed June 29, 2018.

<sup>523</sup> The "conflation" between Oświęcim and Auschwitz has shifted over the years in regards to Polish national, symbolic, religious, and political associations with the site. For example, the site's name up until 1998 was the State Museum of Oświęcim-Brzezinka (Zubrzycki 2006, 118).

<sup>524</sup> Cemetery in this context means the ashes of the bodies cremated in the ovens that were absorbed by the landscape (including "ash ponds") as well as buried in pits.

<sup>525</sup> The current installation in the Polish pavilion at Auschwitz-Birkenau dates back to the 1960s and is set to be redesigned. The revised narrative, according to Paweł Cywiński, the Museum's Director is that, "On one floor of the barrack, we want to present the story of Polish victims of Auschwitz. This means showing the history of both Polish political prisoners and Polish Jews. And then the second floor should have an exhibition that would present Auschwitz in the context of local environment, local geography." See the Muzeum Historii Polski's website. [http://www.polishhistory.pl/index.php?id=17&L=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=4526&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=54&cHash=608b1b7780641eae7e20030129334ba6](http://www.polishhistory.pl/index.php?id=17&L=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4526&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=54&cHash=608b1b7780641eae7e20030129334ba6). Accessed June 28, 2018.

<sup>526</sup> Zubrzycki 2006, 139.

For, ironically, Poland's identity as a nation perpetually under siege may actually compete with the Jews' traditional sense of themselves as the primary victims of history.<sup>527</sup>

Controversies about the Srebrenica Memorial reflect these themes. Both the land and the atrocity's memory are contested while there is a division between the genocide's victims and its perpetrators in the site's installations. In this binary, the Bošniak identity centers upon innocence, tolerance, suffering, victimhood, and martyrdom. The Bosnian Serb identity is cast in opposition rooted in guilt, defiance, terror, belligerence, and depravity. These depictions, unfortunately, leave very little room to talk about the grey which, according to Orlović, diminishes the tragedy of what took place.

This stark mindset obscures the greater processes that were in place before the war while inhibiting violence prevention mechanisms from taking root.<sup>528</sup> Džidić put it another way: if you accept that genocide took place, then you are seen as automatically denying crimes against Bosnian Serbs and are a traitor. It always comes down to "us" versus "them," he said.<sup>529</sup> For example, right now the memory battle is centered on ethnicity as the primary differentiator. After that, Nukić mused, what are the other parts of these identities that come into play and are they just as rigid?<sup>530</sup>

Not all Bosnian Serbs were active participants in the war, much less the genocide; many were swept up in it. Informal stories of inter-ethnic cooperation and rescue receive less attention because there is no room in the nationalist discourse for them. Several interviewees who were survivors were clear that there must also be room to acknowledge Bosnian Serb and Bošniak deaths together because the war's tragedy is one overarching

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<sup>527</sup> Young 1993, 115.

<sup>528</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

<sup>529</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>530</sup> A point that came out of a discussion with Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

experience. For Kerim, suffering is suffering regardless of your ethnicity. He emphasized that “both of us know what it means to lose a father” and that “if you cannot see pain in others, we have learned nothing.”<sup>531</sup> Hariz said he also did not differentiate between the two sides and who is who, preferring to think of the community as “all of us.”<sup>532</sup>

Not all of the young people I spoke with were as forgiving. Emin told me that while he generally had good relations with the older Bosnian Serbs in the community, he wondered if his father’s killers were potentially among them.<sup>533</sup> He does not, though, harbor any animosities towards people his age or younger since they were innocent children during the war. Jelena, a Bosnian Serb activist, said that there is a strong national and international perception that everyone in her ethnic community is a killer which is not the case: “we are just humans.”<sup>534</sup>

Milovanović’s comments straddled a broader spectrum of the victim-perpetrator binary. He began by saying that he never had any shame defending “his people” who were expelled in 1992; his property was also destroyed. Later in our conversation, he explained that there was no readiness to deal with these issues because everyone uses the anguish of their community subjectively. No one can lay blame on an entire population

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<sup>531</sup> Personal interview, “Kerim,” age 21, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>532</sup> Personal interview, “Hariz,” age 47, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>533</sup> Personal interview, “Emin,” age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>534</sup> Jelena recounted a painful interaction with a tour group from Asia. One of the visitors began asking questions about the homes on the hill above the Memorial, queries my interviewee could not answer. The visitor then inquired about her nationality and upon hearing that the latter was a Bosnian Serb, asked if she had killed someone. Personal interview, “Jelena,” Bosnian Serb activist #2, Srebrenica *opština*, August 29, 2016.



regardless if they were in the war, he said, because it is having a deleterious effect on young people who had nothing to do with the conflict.<sup>535</sup>

This diverging group of perspectives amongst the Bosnian Serb residents and politicians I spoke with, both on- and off-the-record, is connected to a point that Pestalić made. He said that their behavior (i.e., that of Bosnian Serbs) is constantly under a cloud of collective guilt while they are simultaneously antagonized by the poisonous rhetoric of politicians who are actively trying to erase the crime.<sup>536</sup> Holliday took a wider view based on his extensive experience working with victims' associations of all ethnic groups across the region. In the same way that it is unfair to blame all Bosnian Serbs for the genocide, he said, it is equally unhelpful for Bosnian Serbs to categorize all Bošniaks as mujahedeen (the latter of which were responsible for some of the more gruesome crimes committed against Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats).<sup>537</sup>

The Dutch Exhibit, as I mentioned, downplays the deaths of Bosnian Serb civilians who were killed in skirmishes and small battles led by Orić as early as 1993. This not only diminishes the humanity of these victims but also serves as justification for their deaths. It precludes the possibility that some of them may have been innocent. Mašić points out that this fits squarely within a narrative based on the myth of Serbian aggression that obscures, amongst other factors, the complicated economic and political situation that led to the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>538</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Milovanović described one occasion when his son was participating in a local football match when someone shouted, "What is that Četnik's son doing on the field?" Personal interview, Miloš Milovanović, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, September 1, 2016.

<sup>536</sup> Personal interview, Damir Pestalić, Head Imam of Srebrenica, August 30, 2016.

<sup>537</sup> See Džidić 2016.

<sup>538</sup> Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

Reconciling the Orić question brings up issues that transcend transitional justice. The debate about him illuminates how discursive spaces around the narrative are both constructed and restricted as well as how the population's diverse experiences have been reproduced into a unified whole. Is it possible to meaningfully address the ABiH's defense of Srebrenica while still sticking with the narrative that the citizens and refugees in the city were at the mercy of the VRS' relentless attacks and UNPROFOR's hamstrung efforts? Is there a grey space between complete passivity and total resistance when it comes to the people caught in the middle? Duijzings argues

The approach developed by some Muslim politicians helps to conceal certain sensitive issues: the massacre is decontextualized and made into a generic symbol of Muslim victimhood, of a genocide carried out by Serbs against the Muslims of Bosnia as a whole. Yet, this representation of events helps to divert attention away from the fact that Srebrenica was an important [center] of Muslim resistance. During the war, this was the first town that Muslim forces re-conquered. It was also a base for attacks on Serb villages, even after the enclave had been officially demilitarized. Further, this representation helps draw attention away from accusations that Srebrenica was 'betrayed' by Muslim politicians, the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Army.<sup>539</sup>

Perhaps this is why just a single photo of Orić on a terrace overlooking Srebrenica hangs inside the Spomen Soba without a caption. Or, why there are a few small images of him with other members of the ABiH inside one of the hallways in the Dutch Exhibit that refer to them solely as Srebrenica's "defenders"? The bigger silence around Orić at the site is not just about a single man but also about how the hegemonic narrative of suffering, innocence, and victimhood is reinforced.

Can the site present these two different facets of Srebrenica's Bošniak community—as victims of genocide as well as fighters who also committed atrocities? There are photos of Bošniak men holding guns during the *marš smrti* although this is downplayed

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<sup>539</sup> Duijzings 2007, 164.

in the accompanying text boards (Figure 5D.8). The refusal to engage with these messy issues within the Bošniak narrative is countered by the intense emphasis on casting all Bosnian Serbs as villains. Moll told me that this kind of globalizing—a steadfast refusal to differentiate people—is highly problematic.<sup>540</sup> Perhaps, too, part of this singular focus on generating a monolithic Bosnian Serb scoundrel can be attributed to the fact that the genocide is largely positioned as the responsibility of an individual ethnic group which obscures the greater part that Serbia had in planning the tragedy.

### **Some Voices Are Louder Than Others**

Beyond the symbolism of listing victims' individual names on monuments, the use of their stories within exhibitions can serve as another way to re-humanize them by creating presence inside places dominated by absence. Pictures and biographies of victims and survivors can help to personalize the tragedy that befell hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people. The use of family photos inside the shower facilities where prisoners had their heads shorn and arms tattooed at Auschwitz-Birkenau as well as the headshots of the Khmer Rouge's prisoners taken before their executions that are on display at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum are both iterations of this.<sup>541</sup> This personalized imagery can generate a new and more intimate level of knowledge about what happened well after the victims' lives were extinguished.

The selected stories and photos, though, can wind up supporting problematic themes. For example, Sodaro highlights how the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda has used the trope of Holocaust memorialization (one that emphasizes the political, economic, and

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<sup>540</sup> Personal interview, Nicolas Moll, memorialization expert, August 3, 2016.

<sup>541</sup> The site was called S-21 and later converted into the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide in Phnom Penh. See <http://www.tuolslenggenocidemuseum.com>. Accessed June 29, 2018.

social processes that led to the catastrophe) to support its assertion that a similar poisonous colonial ideology is responsible for the bloodshed (as opposed to individuals stoked by ethnic tensions and hate speech).<sup>542</sup> The memorial thus glosses over the historical internecine violence that led to the slaughter of over 800,000 people over a three month period, the vast majority of whom were Tutsis. This, in turn, reinforces Rwanda's international victimhood while enabling the authorities to crack down on anyone who disagrees. As a consequence, she argues, "The government has imposed a version of the past and present that often diverges from the known and lived reality of much of the Rwandan population."<sup>543</sup>

Although the political contexts vary widely, one aspect of preserving the hegemonic Bośniak narrative of victimhood is reflected through the privileging of certain voices at the Srebrenica Memorial. The site functions on three levels: as an international commemorative space; as a state institution created by the OHR; and as a symbolic reparation. At stake here is who retains authorship and control over how July 1995 is represented across the exhibitions—both in terms of which survivors are featured as well as how the Dutch frame their role.

There are thousands of women who signed the petitions to establish the site, yet it is the most prominent Mothers who dominate the discourse. It follows that their particular stories are reflected throughout the installations even though there is no mention about their specific roles. The site, however, is mandated to memorialize the genocide of which their individual stories are a part. According to Tamara Šmidling of the Peace Academy Foundation, this is partially because people feel overwhelmed by the "memory issue,"

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<sup>542</sup> Sodaro 2018, 108.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

especially when they are forced to remember things they may not want to. She said there are complaints amongst the general population about the small group of memory stakeholders who shape the discourse. It is always the same people leading the discussion, she commented, underscoring the importance for diversifying the kinds of stories being circulated.<sup>544</sup>

The biographical installations inside the Spomen Soba were originally chosen to represent the spectrum of victims' identities and stories. However, Srebrenica's fraught memory politics ensured that certain victims were prioritized. For example, the story of Hilmo Subašić was added to the biographical installations inside the Spomen Soba at the insistence of Munira, who was his wife.<sup>545</sup> The privileging of prominent survivors' and politicians' voices is even more pronounced in the Dutch Exhibit. Out of fourteen personal stories that are peppered throughout it, four belong to the Mothers (Hajra, Hatidža, Kada Hotić, and Šuhra Sinanović) (Figure 5D.9). In addition to Hasan and Ilijaz Pilav, another four were and/or remain politicians (Ahmetović, Hamdija Fejzić, Hakija Meholfić, and Zulfo Salihović) (Figure 5D.10).<sup>546</sup> It is unclear how or why the remaining four survivors were selected for inclusion. The stories of Hajra's missing son, Nihad

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<sup>544</sup> Personal interview, Tamara Šmidling, Peace Academy Foundation, August 10, 2016.

<sup>545</sup> Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016. Munira lost 22 members of her family during the genocide. She frequently voices her opinion about various non-Srebrenica related national and international issues. In 2015, for example, she controversially stated that the Armenian genocide overlooked crimes against Turks that happened at the same time. There is a paradox here: she is a genocide survivor fighting to keep Srebrenica's memory alive in an environment that strongly denies it. In this case, it appears that she is siding with her Muslim counterparts who promote Armenian genocide denial as well as heavily restrict its memorialization at a time when Turkey's economic and political influence in Bosnia continues to expand. See Anadolu Agency 2015.

<sup>546</sup> Pilav was a famous wartime surgeon considered to be one of the last men to leave Srebrenica.

“Nino” Ćatić, as well as that of Rijad Šaban Fejzić (Riki), the son of another high profile survivor, Sabaheta Fejzić, are also included (Figure 5D.11).<sup>547</sup>

I am critical of the emphasis on stories from a small group of the Mothers because, at times, it appears the Memorial is *theirs*.<sup>548</sup> On a symbolic level that is absolutely true. What has differentiated their individual accounts of horror is that they became the public faces of the genocide’s aftermath. However, if we think of the connection between the installations and reparations more broadly, can the meaningful integration of more voices at the site benefit the community? By that I mean bringing more of their stories to the forefront of the exhibitions.<sup>549</sup> For example, Karup-Druško told me that the victims’ associations impose their truths within the public realm because they believe they have a

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<sup>547</sup> Nino was a radio operator in Srebrenica who wrote one the final pleas for help that was broadcast out on July 10, 1995. The biographies of Junuz, Hajra’s husband, as well as Kada Hotić’s husband, Sead, are also featured in the Spomen Soba.

<sup>548</sup> On a more constructive note, another room features eight black and white photographs of other women (albeit sans any copy). One of them is Saliha Osmanović who was thrust into the spotlight when footage of her husband, Ramo, surfaced; she later testified for the prosecution during the Mladić trial and is featured in *Srebrenica: Cry from the Grave*. Taken during July 1995, the video shows Ramo, at the insistence of armed VRS soldiers and in possibly what were the last moments of his life, calling out to his younger son, Nermin, so he would come out of the mountains and surrender. It is one of the most gripping videos I have ever seen. In 2015, a life-sized sculpture of Ramo entitled “*Nermine, dođi*” (“Nermin Come”), in his now immortalized pose with his hands around his mouth, was unveiled by the artist Mensud Kečo in Sarajevo’s *Veliki Park* (Great Park) in close proximity to the children’s memorial—not that anyone told Saliha about it at the time. It was subsequently sawn in half in 2017. On the Osmanović family’s ordeal, see Sense Agency 2013. On the statue’s debut, see the Sarajevo Times 2015b. On the statue’s vandalism, see Daily Sabah Europe 2017.

<sup>549</sup> Between 2012 and 2014, the German-based NGO, Cinema for Peace, conducted interviews with Srebrenica’s survivors with the aim of creating a video archive of these testimonies. However, the project’s implementation, expenditures, staffing choices, and interview methodology were all heavily criticized as being misguided, including re-traumatizing some of the interviewees. The project ended abruptly in 2014. Some of these interviews are featured in one of the side rooms at the Galerija 11/07/95.

monopoly. This creates a tension since some individual victims want to tell their own stories, especially as they may never get the chance to do so at court.<sup>550</sup>

As I mentioned, six of the men in the Dutch Exhibit were and/or are influential. There is a reliance on representing men's bodies in two ways: downtrodden with injuries or though pictures of bones, skulls, and skeletons. These images, many of them taken by Samarah, all feature heavily in the Spomen Soba and the Dutch Exhibit as well as in the cemetery's small conference room. There is a good reason why human remains lead the discussion: it is all that is left of many but not all of the victims. Where, though, are the interpretations of those who survived? Their accounts of July 1995 are inherently different from the women's in that the men were targeted immediately for execution.

Some of the younger survivors, for example, are finding their voices heard on the international stage, including Nedžad Avdić (who survived the executions at the Petkovci dam); Hasan Hasanović (a survivor of the *marš smrti* as well as one of the Memorial's guides); and Hajrudin Mesić (who was captured near Kravica and survived several ambushes).<sup>551</sup> Their stories, though, are not reflected at the site (save for Witness O whose partial testimony at the ICTY is featured in the SENSE Center).<sup>552</sup>

I argue that the inclusion of their experiences at the site diverges from the primary narrative that nearly all the men and boys were executed. By keeping the men's voices silent, it also enables the Memorial to deflect questions about the identities of those who

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<sup>550</sup> Personal interview, Dženana Karup-Druško, Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016.

<sup>551</sup> While Hasanović, along with Azir Osmanović, handle the majority of tours at the Memorial, their specific stories are not formally included in any of the exhibitions. On a typical article about Avdić (which also includes Mesić), see Parry 2017.

<sup>552</sup> Witness O was a teenage survivor who survived one of the mass executions in July 1995. He testified during the Krstić case. See ICTY. "Witness O."

survived (e.g., whether they were soldiers) while simultaneously reinforcing their status as passive victims. It also secures the women's political leverage and agency as the face of Srebrenica's survivors sustaining their legitimacy in a country governed by men.

### *Accepting versus Deflecting Responsibility*

What happens when the memorial is financed and/or controlled by one of the groups or nations fully or partially responsible for the carnage?<sup>553</sup> Memorials are also an arena of articulation precisely because they are, in some form or another, the site of politically and/or socially motivated crimes. The exhibitions form a core part of these sites' production of specific kinds of knowledge. For the Netherlands, Srebrenica remains a polarizing and traumatic topic. When they returned home, Dutchbat soldiers were reviled by their fellow citizens, much in the same way that Vietnam War veterans in the US were castigated by the American public. In 2002, the Dutch government resigned in response to the publication of the Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD)'s report that revealed the extent to which the peacekeeping mission in Srebrenica was doomed from the start as well as mismanaged.<sup>554</sup>

What exactly, though, are the Dutch taking responsibility for in the exhibit?<sup>555</sup> Those most closely associated with it claim that the families had no real issue so long as one part focused on the survivors' stories. Other survivors and civil society activists talked about how the Dutch were, in some sense, blackmailing the Memorial by offering

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<sup>553</sup> Williams 2007, 131.

<sup>554</sup> The edited volume, *Investigating Srebrenica: Institutions, Facts, Responsibilities*, offers analyses on the different reports that have been produced by various international and national actors including those by the Dutch, and French as well as the RS and BiH Parliament. See Delpha et al. 2012.

<sup>555</sup> A point that came out of a discussion with Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.



sustained investment in exchange for the opportunity to shape part of the narrative.<sup>556</sup>

Some of the survivors were very unhappy that the exhibition was even created. They said it allowed the Dutch to parcel out responsibility across a greater set of international actors while accentuating their own inability to prevent the tragedy.

The survivors' stories are featured alongside nine Dutchbat soldiers and military brass. The selection of Dutchbat's voices are equally curious; at least two of them are men who frequently visit the site and continue to stay engaged in Srebrenica (Boudewijn Kok and Marco Smit). By intermixing the profiles of Srebrenica's survivors with those from Dutchbat under the banner of "various voices" there is an implicit connection of suffering as well denial of agency that unites them within the Srebrenica's tragedy. A small room is devoted to Dutchbat soldiers who suffer from PTSD which receives the same amount of copy as the "survivor organizations" board (Figures 5D.12 & 5D.13). The latter contains a short generic paragraph bereft of any detailed information about the women's associations. Three additional sentences on this same board are devoted to their close partnership with PAX and Kamp Westerbork, both involved in creating the exhibit.

Photos about daily life inside the compound reveal relative privilege, however difficult it was, and sit in contrast to the images of Srebrenica's beleaguered

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<sup>556</sup> According to the 2016-2018 Strategic Report, Phase 1 of the property's upgrades included creation of the Dutch Exhibit; the small library in the former medical wing; the SENSE Center; and raising funds for Phase 2. The reconstruction of the administration buildings did not happen. Phase 2 includes upgrading the small security building at the property's gate (close to the UN block) and renovations to the Warehouse (Tvornička Hala-Muzej II/Factory Hall-Museum II, which is planned for 2019-2023). The report also mentions cataloging all the "elements" inside and outside the property that should be preserved. See Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center. Srednjoročni Plan Rada 2016-2018 (Medium Term Work Plan 2016-2018). [https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Srednjorocni\\_plan\\_rada\\_MC\\_2016-2018.PDF](https://www.potocarimc.org/images/Srednjorocni_plan_rada_MC_2016-2018.PDF). Accessed March 28, 2018.

population.<sup>557</sup> The recreation of some of the offices dramatizes as well as normalizes the challenges Dutchbat encountered while solely using two-dimensional materials to convey what the population endured. Still, the former communications center is the only part of the Battery Factory that has been significantly refurbished (Figure 5D.14).

The integration of the Dutchbat command's perspective as well as its soldiers' experiences reflects the challenges of incorporating a third narrative that contrasts with how the genocide has historically been memorialized—the compromise being the three different “storylines.” Again, it is worth asking why the Dutch decided to invest heavily in a space to which so few civilians had access (Figures 5D.15a & 5D.15b). Their government's sustained involvement makes sense in terms of symbolic reparations. However, Mašić pointed out that they could have a greater impact if they stepped outside the Srebrenica bubble (e.g., strictly filtering everything through the window of July 1995) and focused instead on contemporary issues affecting all Bosnian citizens.<sup>558</sup>

### **The Temporal Island of July 1995**

Transitional justice mechanisms, such as criminal prosecutions and truth commissions, often narrow their scope to a particular time period, what Hinton calls “transitional justice time.”<sup>559</sup> This limited calendar may, for example, omit the broader historical circumstances leading up to the hostilities while discounting the local power

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<sup>557</sup> Perhaps this reflects the wide range of local perceptions about the individual peacekeepers that Nukić elucidated upon. Sometimes they are considered as the main perpetrators while other times they are seen as just soldiers. Sometimes they are seen as unfriendly while other times they are apologetic (simultaneously refusing responsibility for what happened). Personal interview, Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.

<sup>558</sup> Some former Dutchbat soldiers have created Srebrenica-related charities while others have made private financial and material donations to individual families. Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

<sup>559</sup> Hinton 2013, 88.

dynamics that may still be operating. It may also minimize ongoing contestations about the conflict's memory while overlooking ongoing political, social, economic, and legal problems.<sup>560</sup> Temporality and chronology are also connected to how a group structures its collective memories around specific events. According to Y. Zerubavel,

Through the restructuring of the past, the commemorative narrative creates its own version of historical time as it elaborates, condenses, omits, or conflates historical events. By using these and other discursive techniques, the narrative transforms historical time into commemorative time.<sup>561</sup>

For example, Sturken discusses the inclusion of a single brick that sits without much fanfare inside the 9/11 Museum. It is a remnant of the Abbottabad compound in Pakistan (where US forces captured Osama bin Laden) inside an exhibition that barely mentions his death.<sup>562</sup> She highlights how this reflects the challenges of identifying when exactly 9/11 began and ended if we take into account the political and historical repercussions of US foreign policy in the Middle East and Afghanistan (amongst other possible factors).<sup>563</sup>

I argue that the temporal emphasis on July 1995 to the near exclusion of everything else does not only do a disservice to Srebrenica's tragedy but puts a buttress around its memory. In the Spomen Soba as in the SENSE Center, it is only about July 1995. In the Dutch Exhibit, the emphasis stays on the numbers of the dead, the timeframe, the execution sites, and the mass grave exhumations, although this is bookended with some pre- and post-war context boards. We need to remember that, although it tries to address this historical gap, many visitors may not see it. This leaves the Spomen Soba to do the

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<sup>560</sup> González 2010, 300; Gray 2010, 87; and Nagy 2008, 280.

<sup>561</sup> Y. Zerubavel 1995, 9.

<sup>562</sup> Sturken 2015, 472.

<sup>563</sup> Sturken 2015, 486.

heavy lifting of explaining the genocide's wartime context, which, since at least 2010, it has been unable to do.

There is also another issue: specifically what parts of the history and facts about the last war can or cannot be included? There are three separate installations that communicate various bits of July 1995 in slightly different ways. Each is designed as a standalone exhibit containing its own quirks in terms of both what it communicates about the genocide and how it does so. Still, the genocide was the catalyst for Memorial's creation and its mandate. This makes it challenging for outsiders to understand the greater context that led to it. On some level this absolves the site from having to discuss the broader issues related to the war that paint Bošniaks as anything other than pure victims.

Even the dates of when the Bosnian War began and ended are problematic for Bosnian citizens. For example, these dates determine who can and cannot claim rights and benefits, according to Mamut. She also said that Bosnian Croat claims that the war started earlier than 1992 are dismissed which serve to promote one particular narrative—that of Serbian “aggression.”<sup>564</sup> The genocide is the rupture that cordons off July 1995 from the rest of the war as well as what specifically transpired in the Podrinje. As Kokeza explained, though, it is not possible to isolate this one event; the war occurred over several years and many things happened. Conflict has broken out in the region every fifty years and the international community, he said, does not take this into account—including the fact that each war is somehow about avenging the previous one.<sup>565</sup>

The Dutch Exhibit is largely confined to using the genocide as the lens to interpret what happened before and after July 1995. Hasan said that the Dutch are trapped within a

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<sup>564</sup> Personal interview, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>565</sup> Personal interview, Marinko Sekulić Kokeza, RTV Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

two-week window even though the factors that led to the genocide unfolded over a much longer period of time.<sup>566</sup> The exhibit also goes to great length to highlight the differences and arguments that arose between UN headquarters and Dutchbat's leadership that peaked when Srebrenica fell. A more cynical observer could argue that it is an attempt to misdirect some of the blame, including how faulty and misguided decisions by the international community had life changing consequences for Srebrenica's population. Little attention is paid, for example, to how the Srebrenica territory shrank under UNPROFOR, according to Kulaglič. The totality of what transpired is not memorialized, something made easier by focusing the entire narrative through the lens of two weeks.<sup>567</sup>

### Images



Figure 5A.1: Five floor administrative building (front view).

In 2016, it looked exactly as it did in 2011, when this photograph was taken. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

<sup>566</sup> Personal interview, Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, September 8, 2016.

<sup>567</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglič, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.



Figure 5A.2: Close-up of former medical wing with exposed entryway, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5A.3: Warehouse (left side); SENSE Center with the white roof (in the distance background); back of five-floor administrative building as well as medical wing (right side), 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 5A.4: Exterior of the Warehouse, July 11, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5A.5: Partial interior of the Warehouse, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5A.6: Interior walkway doused with water and dramatically lit inside the Warehouse, July 11, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 5A.7: Additional decrepit warehouse on the Memorial's property, 2015.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5A.8: Exterior of the Great Hall where the July 9  
and July 10 ceremonies take place, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5B.1: Entrance to the SENSE Center, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

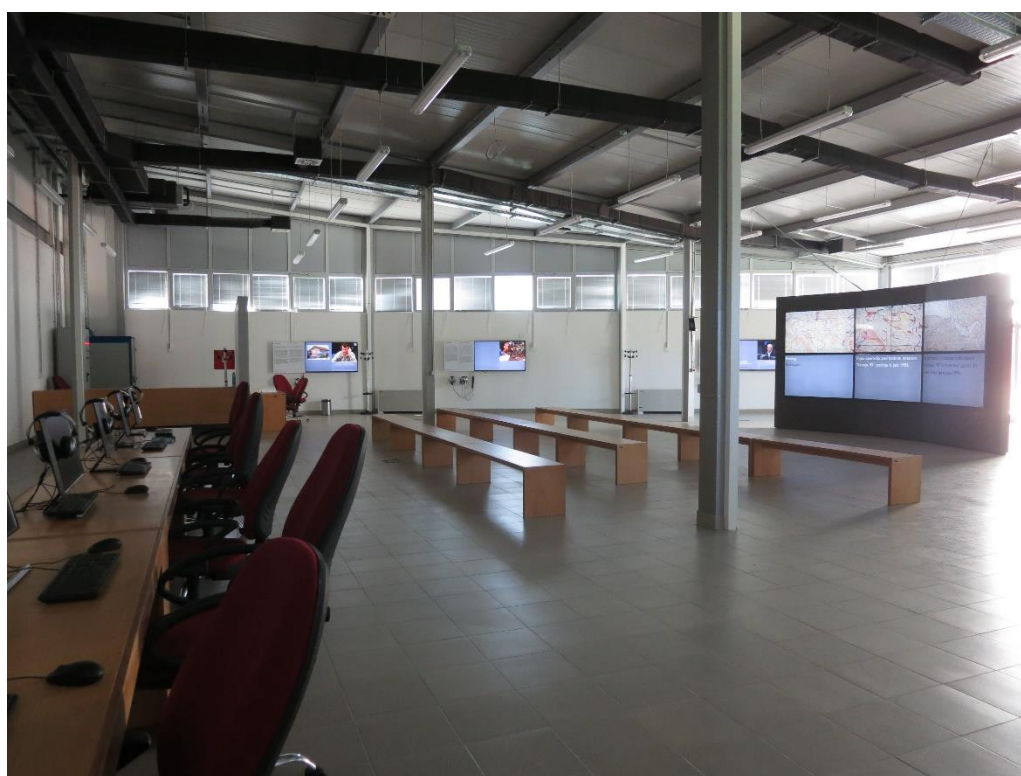


Figure 5B.2: Overview of SENSE Center with computer terminals, television monitors, and video wall, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



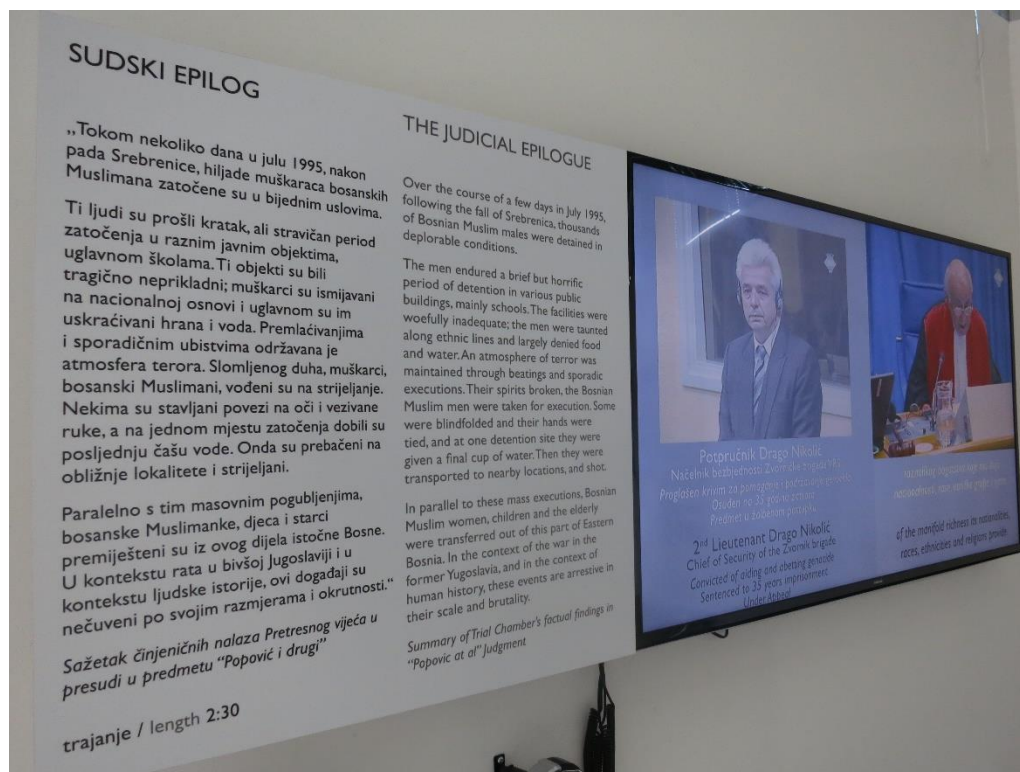


Figure 5B.3: One of eight television monitors with accompanying text boards and audio recordings of the ICTY trials, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5B.4: Video wall inside the SENSE Center, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.1: Exterior of Spomen Soba in the distance, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.2: Inside the Spomen Soba with the two black boxes in the center, 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.3: Black box containing the twenty biographical installations on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 5C.4: Close-up of Hajra Ćatić's husband, Junuz, one of twenty victims' biographies on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

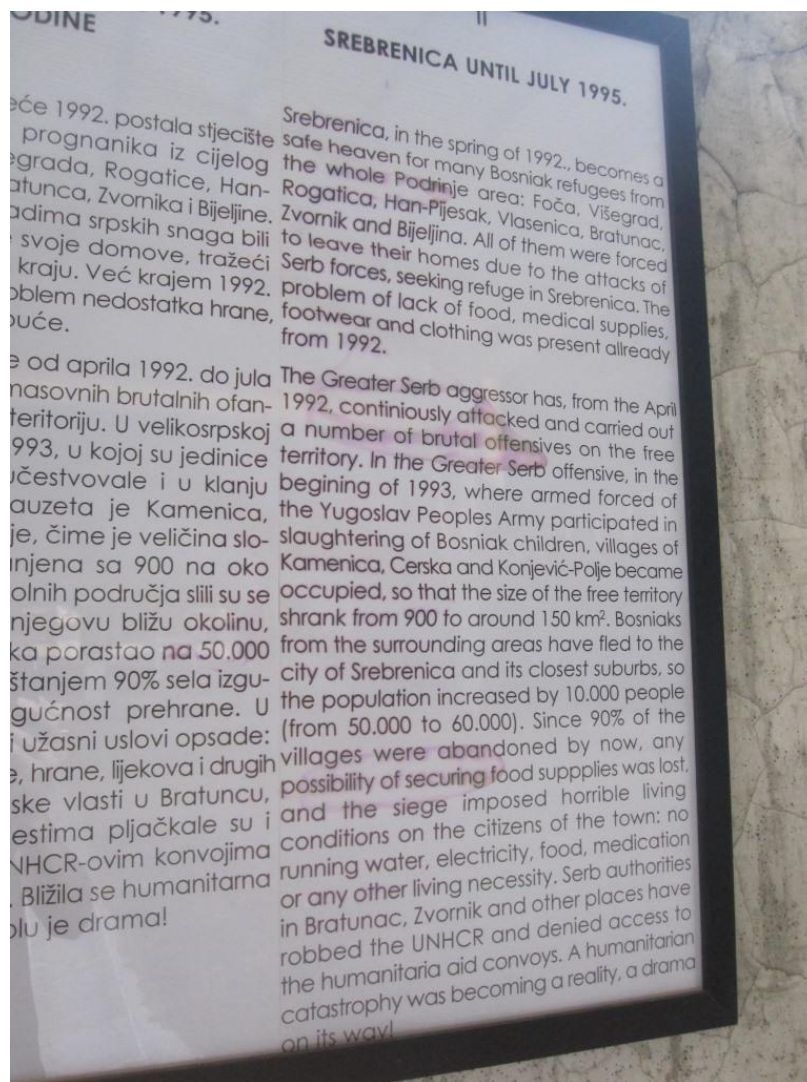


Figure 5C.5: Placard from a 2010 installation inside the Spomen Soba with references to the “Greater Serb aggressor” and “brutal offensives on the free territory,” 2010. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.6: Banner combining imagery from Srebrenica with Kamp Westerbork above the Spomen Soba's entrance (that was eventually removed), 2010. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.7: Installation inside the Spomen Soba, featuring posters of the UN graffiti; Šejla Kamerić's "Bosnian Girl" appears in the upper left, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 5C.8: Old equipment inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

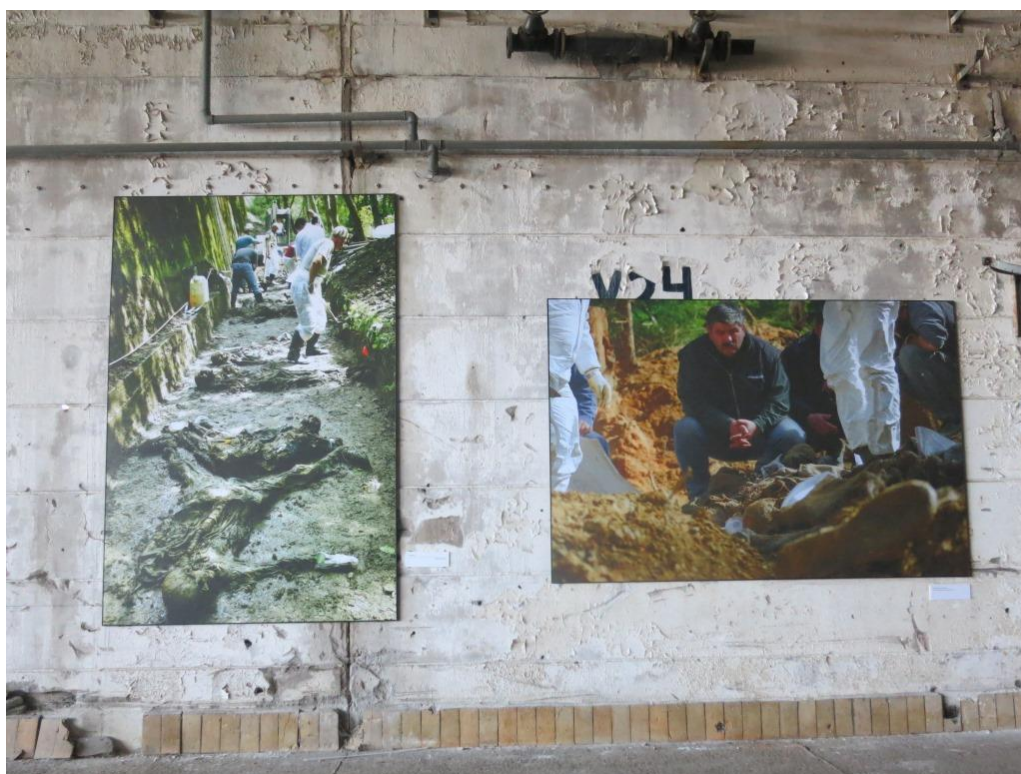


Figure 5C.9: Imagery of skeletons being exhumed on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5C.10: One of seventeen posters of convicted war criminals on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

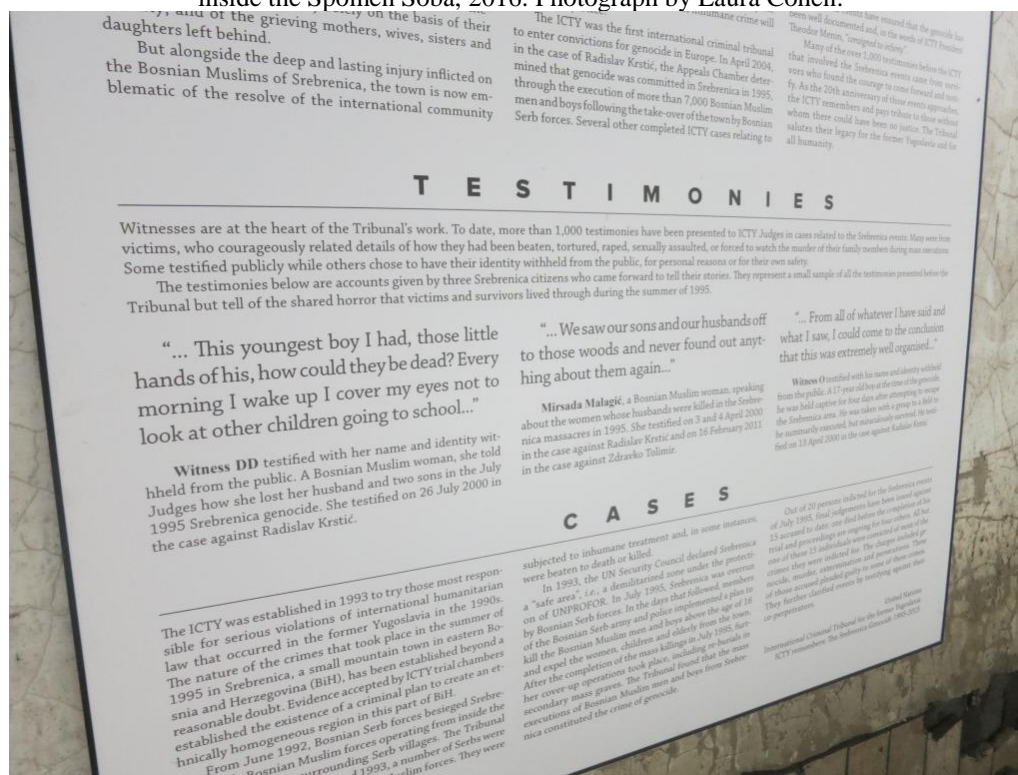


Figure 5C.11: Poster describing the ICTY on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 5C.12: Posters describing the identification process on display inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5D.1: Entrance to the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 5D.2: Interior of Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 5D.3a: Interior room of the former peacekeeping compound prior to renovations. The graffiti on the walls, floors, and tiles are circa 1993-1995, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5D.3b: Same interior room of the former peacekeeping compound after renovations (now the Dutch Exhibit). The graffiti on the walls and floors has been “boxed in” and some of it was tampered with. The tiles on the walls were destroyed when they were resurfaced, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5D.3c: Same Interior room now featuring one of the installations inside the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.





Figure 5D.4: Interior of Dutch Exhibit featuring the “functional” storyline, 2017.  
Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 5D.5: One of the large conference rooms that was recreated in the Dutch Exhibit.  
The placards explain that *this kind of table* was used during important meetings, 2017.  
Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

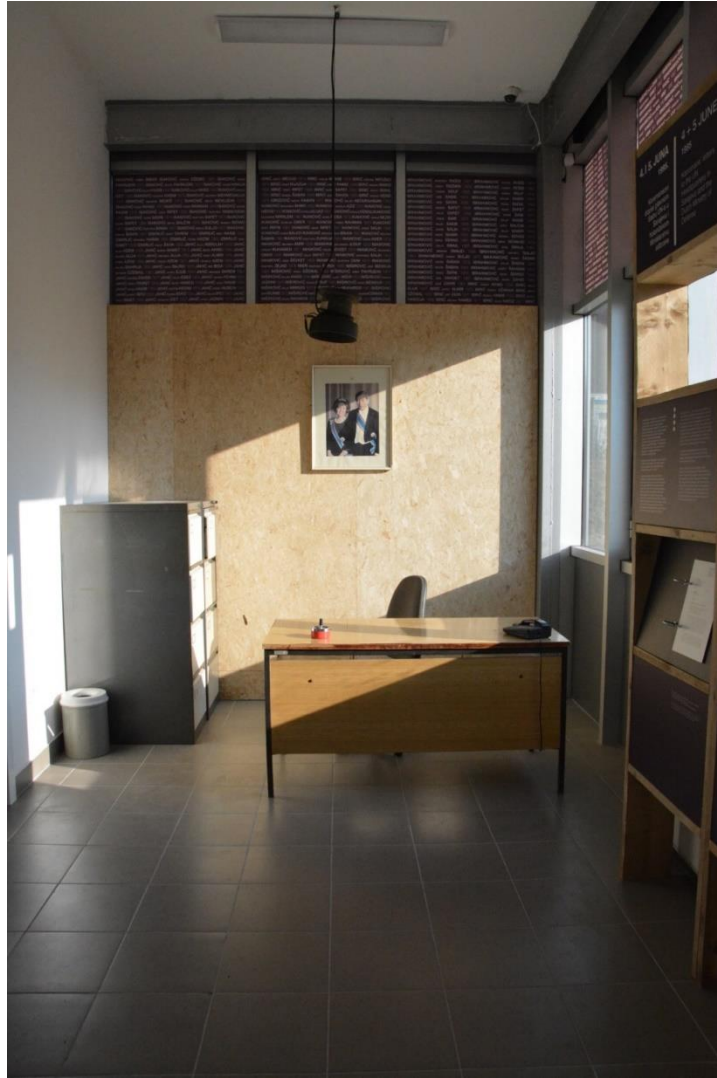


Figure 5D.6: Recreated office of Dutchbat's Deputy Commander Robert Franken, featuring similar (but not original) furniture, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

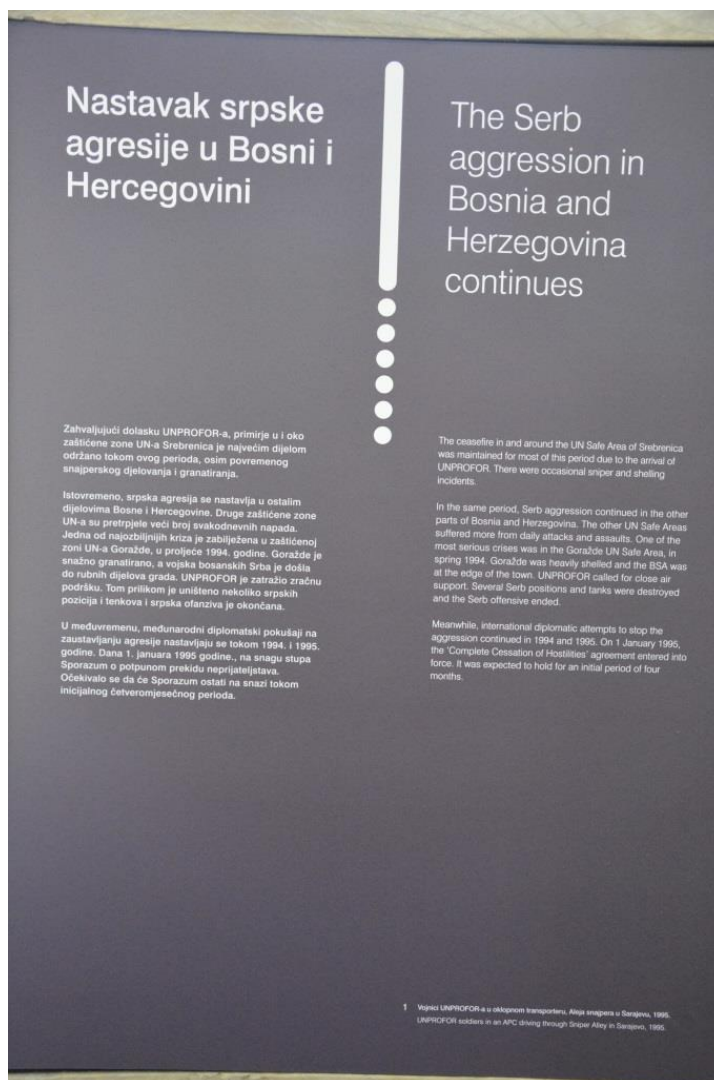


Figure 5D.7: Dutch Exhibit placard with references to the “Serb aggression,” 2017.  
Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.





Figure 5D.8: *Marš smrti* exhibition boards showing injured men as well as some who were carrying weapons and dressed in army fatigues. Only two lines of the copy address the weapons, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 5D.9: First of two boards featured throughout the Dutch Exhibit showcasing prominent survivors, politicians, and former Dutchbat soldiers. Boudewijn Kok is second from the left on the top line; Hasan is in the lower right corner; and Hatidža is second from the right on the top line, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 5D.10: Second of two boards featured throughout the Dutch Exhibit showcasing prominent survivors, politicians, and former Dutchbat soldiers. Sadik Ahmetović is in the upper right corner; Hajra is second from the right on the top line; and directly beneath her is Kada Hotić, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

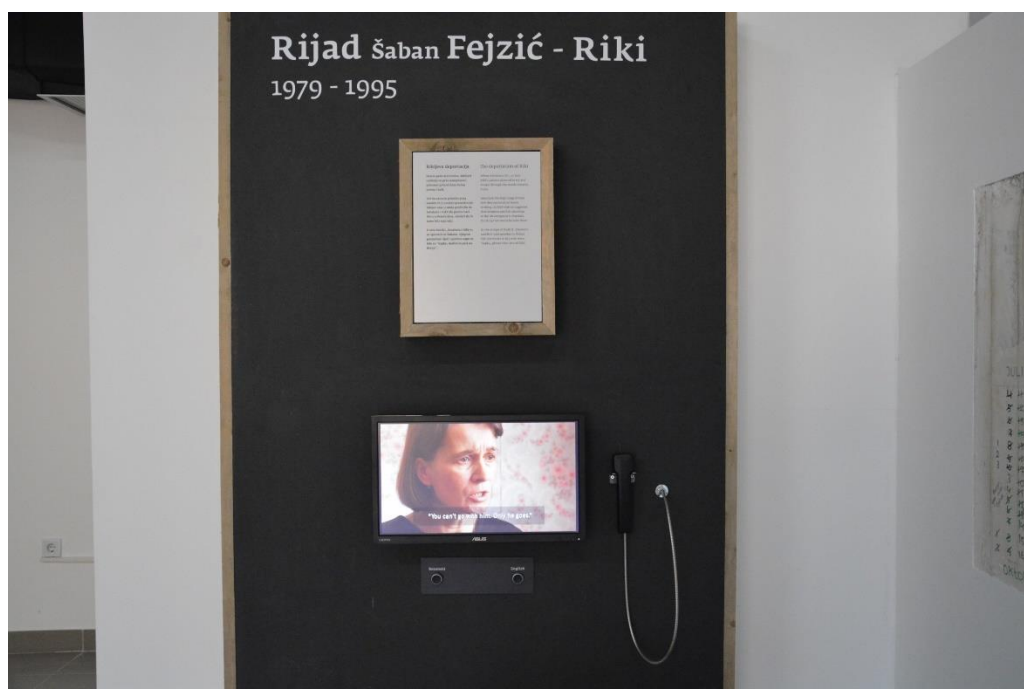


Figure 5D.11: One of several displays in the Dutch Exhibit that recounts the ordeal of Rijad Fejzić's mother to locate his remains, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



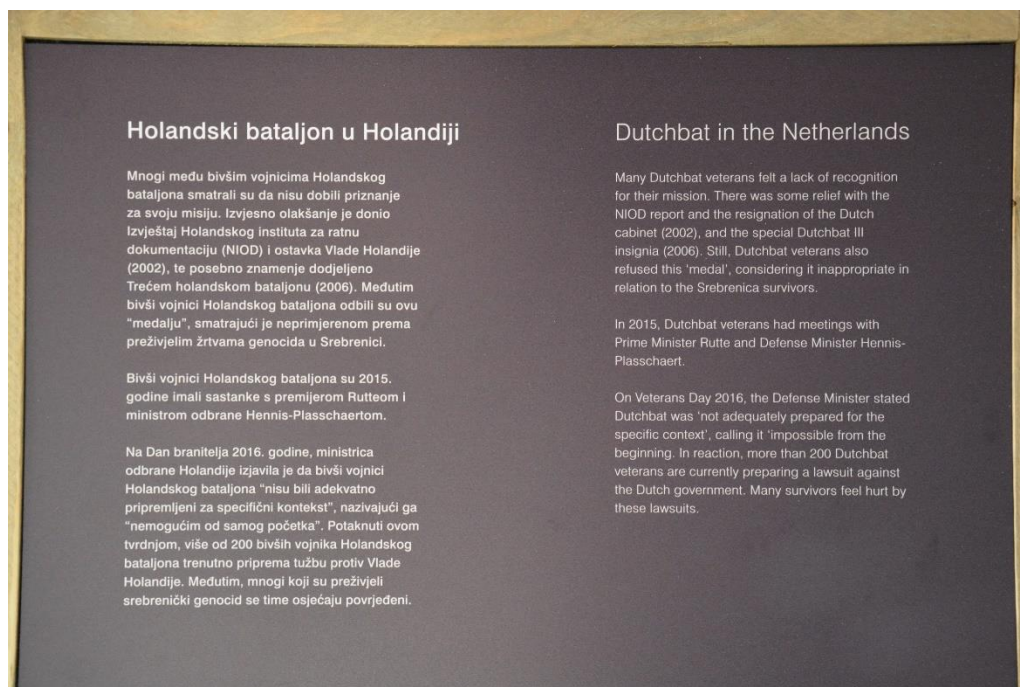


Figure 5D.12: Placard inside the Dutch Exhibit describing the challenges that Dutchbat peacekeepers faced upon returning to the Netherlands, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

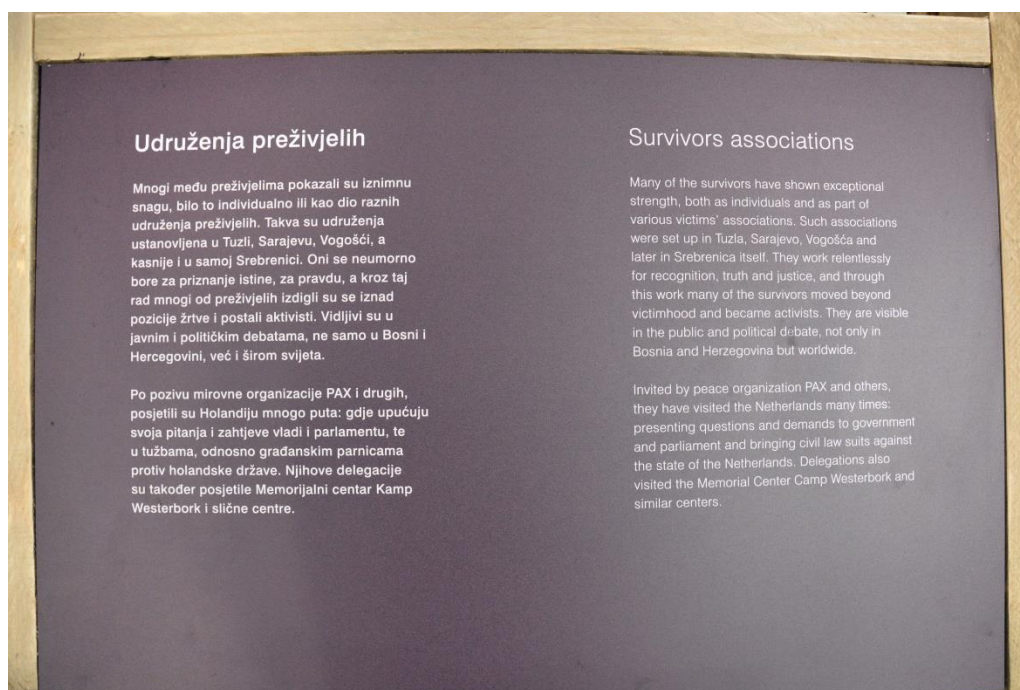


Figure 5D.13: Placard inside the Dutch Exhibit that devotes almost equal space to both describing the survivors' associations (sans any mention of women) and their partnership with PAX and Kamp Westerbork (both of which were instrumental in creating the installation), 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



5D.14: Exterior shot of the renovated SENSE Center (far left with red brick) and Dutch Exhibit building (center building with grey panels) sitting in direct contrast with the deteriorating medical wing (far right) where infamous graffiti, including “Sexbar” is located, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5D.15a: Exterior of former communications center before it was renovated showing how the Harley Davidson and red-shaped graffiti were left exposed, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 5D.15b: Interior of the same room (that is now part of the Dutch Exhibit). The red-shaped graffiti is now “boxed in” while the rest of the walls have been resurfaced, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

## Chapter 6: The Property—Forgotten Spaces, Taboo Memories

Harrowing photographs do not inevitably lose their power to shock. But they are not much help if the task is to understand. Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us.

—Susan Sontag  
*Regarding the Pain of Others*

### **The Red Sweater**

She is forever suspended in a single moment of place and time. Her expression, while hidden, seems oddly peaceful. Her body softly yields itself to the lush green forestry surrounding her. Her head is tilted ever so slightly to the right, as if she is lost deep in thought. She is plainly dressed, in a long sleeve red woolen sweater atop a thin whitish shirt. The similarly colored knee-length skirt looks like the kind of casual frock she might wear at home. Her reddish-brown hair hangs straight, not quite touching her shoulders.

She is neither a teenager nor a woman of middle age. The skin around and behind her knees is pale cream yet her calves reveal haphazardly placed red blotches. Her bare feet and ankles are muddy and swollen with uncomfortable bluish-purple spots indicative of a deep bodily trauma. She is standing upright, with her straightened arms reaching ever so slightly towards the tree in front of her. You could be forgiven for thinking she has momentarily paused there to catch her breath before continuing on, despite the fact she is not properly dressed for traipsing deep within the woods.

Instead, she is forever suspended in a single moment of place and time because she hanged herself from a very large tree sometime during the tumult of July 1995. Now she towers over visitors inside the Spomen Soba, this time as a massive twelve foot poster on the back wall. She is disturbingly captivating to behold, hanging peacefully in this, the most intimate final moment of her life. A tiny four by six-inch placard offers the briefest of explanations (Figure 6.1):

Ferida Osmanović, a refugee from Srebrenica, mother of a boy (12) and a girl (10); Tuzla refugee camp, July 1995. The Serb soldiers separated her husband Selman from his family in front of the UN base in Potočari.



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In late July 2011, the town of Srebrenica was going back into its sleepy silence after the intensity of the sixteenth commemoration dissipated. A young survivor whom I had befriended repeatedly insisted that I speak with his cousin. “M” was a 29 year old from the Srebrenica *opština* who now lives in the outskirts of Sarajevo. As M didn’t speak English, his cousin would be translating. Within minutes, it became clear this was less an interview about the Memorial and more about M’s life history.

M was born in a hospital in Ljubovija, Serbia, located across the Drina River from Srebrenica. He and his younger sister grew up in a small mountaintop village of Jezero, within the Srebrenica *opština*. About forty families lived there, or there were forty houses, M couldn’t remember. His father was born in 1957, his mother in 1963; in 1995 that meant they were 38 and 32. M alluded to a happy childhood although nothing in particular stood out to him.

It didn’t take long for our conversation to focus on the war. M described his family’s shock when the conflict arrived on their doorstep. He said that the four of them, along with eight members of his extended family, including two uncles and grandmother, all fled their village in March 1993. They first stayed in Tokovina in the village of Osat, eventually settling in the small village of Pištivoda on top of a hill in the *opština*. Here they remained until they were forced to run for their lives. M, along with his immediate family and tens of thousands of others, decamped en masse to Potočari, the chaos and panic engulfing them on the road, as the VRS rolled into Srebrenica.

His two paternal uncles and two nephews decided to escape through the woods while most of M’s family took cover in the former Feros factory in Potočari on July 11. He still

has vivid nightmares of the blood curdling screams from people being tortured and murdered throughout the night. The sadness in M's voice is overwhelming as he recounts the moment his father was forcibly separated from them the next day as they clutched each other's hands.

“Son, go with your mother and your sister.”

It was the morning of July 12. He remembers the tears in his father's eyes, realizing that things would not end well. Only one of his uncles would survive the *marš smrti*. The other was killed and later buried at the Memorial in 2005—the same year as M's father.

The last time M saw him was while waving from the bus window that he, his sister, and mother had boarded. M was lucky. His was the first group to leave, and in the crush, the VRS had not yet started singling out male children and adolescents. It was very hot, and M hoped his bus carrying about forty people would not encounter any troubles as it made its way to Tuzla.

He remembered local Bosnian Serb residents in Potočari stoning his bus. There were, unfortunately, many checkpoints along the road and everyone eventually had to leave the vehicle before reaching Kladanj via the town of Tišća. M remembered being told by the Bosnian Serb guards to walk straight ahead as the areas to the right and left were mined. M saw about forty to fifty captured men being led away—men that had likely tried to escape through the mountains, although he could not be sure.

He recounted how he, along with a large group of women and children, were forced to walk five or six kilometers, with hostile guards stationed every fifty meters or so. When they crossed into the “free” territory, “their” army (the ABiH) said to continue walking through the tunnel. There they could have a moment's rest in the shade before

boarding new buses that would take them to Dubrave, near the airport outside of Tuzla. Dubrave turned into a refugee staging area of sorts, where the new arrivals promptly collapsed onto cartons they found or onto the bare ground. M, along with his mother and sister, huddled there for three or four days.

“Shhhhh!”

And just like that, M’s cousin cut him off and they exchanged some hushed words before resuming our conversation a few moments later. M’s mother went to fetch something for them to stretch out on. She had been complaining about her headaches. He went to sleep there on that strip of open road, with his mother and sister beside him.

Something was wrong when he woke up the next morning—neither he nor his sister could find their mother. They asked all the other women around them. Everyone assured M that his mother was there somewhere in the mass of refugees. He looked everywhere for her to no avail. Then the woman who had been sitting next to M and his sister took them into her tent. As the interview continued, M stopped talking about his mother and since his face was turning beet red, I didn’t ask any more questions about her.

M and his sister wound up staying in Dubrave for a month, maybe less, maybe ten days—he could not remember. From there he went to a small settlement called Mačkovac, in the village of Banovići, where he and sister lived for about six months with extended family members. One of his surviving uncles brought them to Živinice, where they stayed for another six months in a crowded house before he and his sister were sent to the *Dom Most Zenica* (orphanage) for a year. Afterwards, they lived with another aunt in Vogošća, an area outside of Sarajevo where many of Srebrenica’s survivors reside, for five years. He began living on his own in 2002.

We eventually focused on his life after the war. He was at a crossroads, M said, frustrated by his incapability to move forward, something made worse by the tremendous stress, pain, depression, and fear that continued to hold him back as an adult. He said that more people should come to the Memorial and attend the commemoration to learn about what happened. He did not necessarily hate all Serbs, pointing out that Serbs from Serbia were more democratic rather than local Bosnian Serbs living in the RS. By this point, M looked as though his head might explode so we decided to end the interview.

Sandwiched between our discussion about M's refusal to move back to Srebrenica, his inability to hold down a job, and his complicated thoughts about the Memorial, I missed an important aside. It was a single sentence uttered by M's cousin that I overlooked my first several times reading the transcript.

“By the way, his mom at that point on July 14, she committed suicide.”

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In December 2015, I was preparing to present a paper about the commemoration at an academic conference. The image of Ferida was the first of numerous images I chose to highlight as representative of larger issues with the event. Since it was the picture I knew the least about, I poked around the internet, eventually stumbling across a newspaper article from 2005.<sup>568</sup> It said that the photographer, Darko Bandić, found Ferida's body in the woods outside of Tuzla in the immediate days after Srebrenica was overrun. His photograph of her circulated around international diplomatic corridors, even reaching then US Vice President Al Gore's daughter who begged him to do something.

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<sup>568</sup> Martin 2005.

A name popped out in the article and after frantically searching for the interview transcript, I made the connection. Ferida was M's mother. He and sister were quoted by their full names. Damir (M) and his sister learned what happened to their mother in late 1995, about six months after the photo was taken. I met with Damir in 2011, six years after the article was written. He knew about her fate as well as her harrowing image yet declined to mention it, save for the utterance of a fifteen-word reference by his cousin.

While she may have lived a private life, Ferida's death has been immortalized in one of the Bosnian War's most iconic images. The photograph of her exists in an unusual gap: this is not a bloody image of one of the war's victims nor a gruesome picture of contorted skeletons in a mass grave. Nor is it a picture of a bedraggled woman with a look of hysteria, resignation, or pure shock on her face. Although her picture eclipses the other equally painful and disturbing imagery on display inside the Spomen Soba, her story is nowhere to be found.



Figure 6.1: The image of Ferida Osmanović inside the Spomen Soba, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

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The commemorative memory boom in the 1990s linked human rights promotion with the rights to truth, justice, and remembrance.<sup>569</sup> Western-oriented Holocaust memorialization tropes, such as viewing atrocity photos as well as building memorials for previously unacknowledged victims, were applied in all sorts of contexts, even when those practices were disconnected from local cultural and religious practices and belief systems. For example, the display of hundreds of skulls inside a Buddhist stupa facing visitors in the Choeung Ek Memorial in Cambodia (aka “The Killing Fields”) diverges greatly from the ways that Cambodians pay respect to their dead as well as interpret and even publically acknowledge the genocide.<sup>570</sup> Hinton argues that the basic act of remembering the past under the Khmer Rouge was also under siege as they “sought to obliterate everything that smacked of capitalism, “privatism,” and class oppression.”<sup>571</sup>

How permanent versus temporary commemorative spaces are defined is also connected to sorting out which memories are remembered versus forgotten. Ethnic cleansing and genocide are fundamentally about the physical and cultural erasure of people as well as the reimagining of borders and landscapes. Crematoria and mass graves are designed to eradicate and conceal human traces. But does everything at an atrocity site memorial need to be remembered?

Germany’s counter-monuments highlight this mnemonic discord between recognizing the need to confront a painful memory, on the one hand, and refuting its memorialization in a physical form, on the other.<sup>572</sup> Young argues that, “Instead of searing memory into

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<sup>569</sup> Winter 2006.

<sup>570</sup> Hinton 2008 and 2014 and Williams 2004.

<sup>571</sup> Hinton 2008, 76-79 and 2014, 149.

<sup>572</sup> Young 1993, 27.

public consciousness, they [the German artists] fear conventional memorials seal memory off from awareness altogether.”<sup>573</sup> These counter-monuments are designed, for example, to recede into the ground over time or to engage with viewers in a fundamentally different way than traditional static monuments.

Still, the scars of the atrocities never go away even if they remain unspoken. Which memories should be remembered versus allowed to recede and/or disappear at an atrocity site memorial? Most of the conversation about the Srebrenica genocide emphasizes the men and boys who were murdered. The story of refugee returns, including the Memorial’s foundation, belongs to the female survivors. In between these stories of death and survival, though, is another set of memories and wartime details that are not spoken about. Some of these traces hover in the background of the site’s three installations while others are only known by those who witnessed them.

In this chapter I argue that the processes involved in editing these memories sometimes works at odds against the site’s mandate as a reparative and education mechanism. They are reflective of the battles over who retains authority over the site as well as the cultural norms that dictate what can and cannot be spoken about. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the symbolism of allowing parts of the property to decay and its connection to the systematic elimination of the execution sites elsewhere in the region. In the second part, I look at the different kinds of physical erasure that are happening to arguably one of the site’s greatest forensic artifacts—the politicized graffiti left by Dutchbat—as well as the little known mass grave that was exhumed on the property. Finally, I analyze the ways that women’s experiences are curated and silenced in the

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<sup>573</sup> Young 1993, 28.



exhibitions that mimic the country's patriarchal norms as well as restrictions on discussing stigmatizing topics.

### **Decay: The Battery Factory**

One of the benefits of atrocity site memorials is to leverage the power of its physical space to transport people to a different place in time. However, does the selective rehabilitation or erasure of parts of the site impact or alter the truth of what transpired there? Hindsight makes it easy to overlay our current knowledge and judgements about what happened at these sites even when those impressions may not be accurately reflected by the site's design. The task of sorting out which historical facts as well as artifacts to actively remember and intentionally forget is made all the more challenging when different stakeholders lay claim to the site. The memorial at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site (Dachau) in Germany, for example, was created over a twenty year span and looks nothing like it did during the Holocaust. After the camp was liberated, the site also took on other meanings which affected the property's original Holocaust-specific forensic evidence.<sup>574</sup> Young argues that the disparity between once *was* and what now *is*, is precisely what these kinds of memorials are about. He notes,

Unlike the restored ruins of other sites, the memorial at Dachau does not ask visitors to confuse its orderly, sterile present with its sordid past. Dachau reminds visitors that their own memory of this time, dependent on sites like Dachau, is also necessarily abstract.<sup>575</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> First, the US forces turned it into an "American military stockade," where they detained Nazi soldiers as well as held war crimes trials, according to Young.<sup>574</sup> Afterwards, it was converted into a displaced persons camp that swelled to over 5,000 people. It included the construction of new structures to properly house the population as well as a separate "food-processing center for US troops stationed in Germany and Austria" (Young 1993, 61).

<sup>575</sup> Young 1993, 70.

In contrast to Dachau, the Battery Factory was mostly abandoned after the war. I argue that it is in its crumbling buildings, hollow spaces, and looming structures where we can wrestle with the emotional, physical, and spatial magnitude of the genocide that is fundamentally different than the kinds of memory politics taking place inside the cemetery. When we use the total space of the Battery Factory as a window, we can start to appreciate the complexities of memorializing a historical event that continues to fuel genocide denial, historical revisionism, and, just as crucially, defensive posturing. Different parts of the site are laden with complex memories, some of which are embedded into the walls, buried in the ground, and/or are painted onto plaster, concrete, or metal. As a *lieux de mémoire*, the Battery Factory embodies a significant aspect of the genocide's horror but also the history of what happened from 1992 onward.

However, the eyewitness record here is corroding. Even the large Dutchbat wartime sign that was installed atop the compound was ultimately removed (only a small picture of it is shown in the exhibit). The Warehouse is treated like any random manufacturing facility with trucks and machinery strewn about (Figures 6.2 & 6.3). Perhaps its lack of a single consistent and all-encompassing exhibition is due to its very poor condition. There are lots of sharp edges, broken floors, and rusty beams. Its interior space evokes a particularly ominous feeling—one fully exploited solely for the commemoration, possibly to tug at the heart strings of apologetic diplomats (Figure 6.4).<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> In 2015 and 2016, strategically placed photos of the mass graves, of the human remains, of hysterical refugees, and of the famous image of Karremans drinking *rakija* with Mladić, were lit using dramatic spotlights that also illuminated a couple of puddles on what is normally a dry concrete floor inside the narrow hallway (Figure 6.5). In 2015, an additional temporary exhibit of the photos of the missing men and boys was placed inside one of the dark corridors (Figure 6.6). Days later these haphazard displays are removed and the Warehouse settles back into a slumber.

This massive structure contains valuable pre-war history, wartime memories, and post-war significance representing a core albeit mostly ignored part of the Memorial. It passively rots away, communicating more about absence and gloom rather than being an active participant in telling Srebrenica's story. Here, too, the Battery Factory is somewhat different from Dachau in that every square inch of the latter's property went through a sorting process to determine what to save, abandon, and rehabilitate (in addition to the creation of numerous monuments and group-specific memorials). In contrast, the Warehouse, the rest of the former medical wing, and the administrative offices of the Battery Factory have been left to disintegrate. Over the years, a corner of the former hospital on the ground floor was converted into a modestly renovated conference room and small library.

There is a bitter irony at work here. It seems almost intentional that core parts of the Memorial's physical property are rapidly disintegrating without sustained intervention. Why are the site's survivor stakeholders allowing this to happen—in a place they quite literally control—when they have no influence over the preservation over the execution sites scattered across the region? Why do the memories in certain parts of the Battery Factory wither away as is the case with the execution sites? Perhaps this is due to a shortage of resources, a lack of vision, and/or an unwillingness to confront the memories they contain. Williams picks up on this theme, noting

A marked feature of the memorial museum collection is that it is defined by—or even held hostage to—what the perpetrators in each event *produced* [author emphasis]. Institutions must hence decide how to incorporate, frame, or repudiate the output that the calamity generated, given that it constitutes the stuff of public recognition.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Williams 2007, 26.

### Symbolic Erasure: The Graffiti

We can see this struggle play out when it comes to the site's treatment of Dutchbat's graffiti, arguably the third most photographed element after the cemetery and green caskets. The optics in the Dutch Exhibit serve as a complicated counterpoint to the "functional" storyline that focuses predominantly on the Dutch perspective. What little video footage and pictures of the interior that exist from that period bear minimal resemblance to the contemporary exhibition.<sup>578</sup> Although the Dutch designed and financed it, the Memorial's leadership team was in charge of handling the architectural renovations which they awarded to a local team with no experience in forensic preservation.<sup>579</sup> The walls have been resurfaced and repainted in white paint giving the entire wing a sterile sensibility that has nothing in common with what the premises likely looked like during the war.<sup>580</sup> The graffiti was "boxed" in, artificially framed by the new drywall making them look like cutouts (Figures 6.7, 6.8, and 6.9).

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<sup>578</sup> In 1994, much of the peacekeeping compound was already in disrepair as shown in a rare video taken by a young DB1 soldier named Julian Heel who documented the property. Heel has posted several videos on YouTube documenting daily life for DB1 soldiers as well as conditions in Srebrenica which was by then a designated UN safe area. See Julian Heel. "De compound van Dutchbat in de zomer van 1994." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpn4dxuGTzk>. What is important about these videos is their perspective—they are through the eyes of a Dutchbat soldier making it interesting to see how residents react to his presence. Another video, "Ritje Potočari" shows Heel (who is behind the camera) and another soldier, Hans, driving in a UNPROFOR vehicle up the highway from the Battery Factory into Srebrenica on July 17, 1994. The video shows firsthand evidence of the enclave's destruction up until that point; smaller UN installations; images of residents and children roaming the streets; and the massive amount of lumber that has been cut down. See "Ritje Potočari—Srebrenica UNPROFOR 1994 Dutchbat" See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wD0wLtrZUjs>. Heel documented his visit to the refugee camp built by the Swedish government on July 23, 1994. The ride back to the Battery Factory shows how the situation in the Srebrenica *opština* continued to decline, given the hundreds of dusty people now walking the street, and the increased level of architectural destruction. See "Swedish Shelter Project Srebrenica (door Hans)." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqQ8TjpUIOE>. All accessed June 27, 2018.

<sup>579</sup> Phone Interview, Dion van den Berg, PAX, September 5, 2016.

<sup>580</sup> In 2010, many of the windows in this wing were still missing, leaving the forensic evidence and graffiti exposed to the elements as well as easy targets for vandals. In 2011 and 2012, very

Someone on the local team was accused of tampering with the graffiti by using a magic marker to darken some of the lettering on many of the famous marks, accidentally changing them in the process. The tampering with the graffiti is such an issue that there is a text board about it in the exhibit (Figure 6.10). Equally problematic is that some of the less salacious graffiti was simply painted over and/or destroyed entirely. Floor and wall tiles also containing graffiti were discarded (Figure 6.11).<sup>581</sup> The result is that the local renovations team, intentionally or inadvertently, highlighted the most contemptuous marks. Some have accused the Memorial's stakeholders of deliberately portraying Dutchbat in the worst light rather than preserving the full range of imagery.

When the subject of Dutchbat's much maligned involvement in Srebrenica comes up, their graffiti is used as visual proof of their callousness and complicity (Figure 6.12). Mentions about the rampant chauvinism, sexual abuse, discrimination, and Western male entitlement resurface. Each new article implies that these markings reveal the insidious culture amongst Srebrenica's peacekeepers; some go further by conflating them with the genocide itself.<sup>582</sup> The conversation almost always focuses on the most scandalous markings, most of which are inside the Dutch Exhibit.<sup>583</sup>

Unfortunately, other places where equally offensive (e.g., "Sexbar" and pornographic images with women and horses) as well as more benign graphic marks are located,

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modest improvements had been made, including the installation of windows as well as other mostly cosmetic preservations (such as working doors with locks).

<sup>581</sup> The Dutch commissioned a photographer to document the entire property when the Battery Factory was initially incorporated into the Memorial to maintain a historical record. None of this was taken into account during the renovations. Phone interview, Dion van den Berg, PAX, September 5, 2016.

<sup>582</sup> See Cosua 2011.

<sup>583</sup> Some of these include "Bosnian Girl;" "My Ass is Like a Local;" "Nema Problema" ("No Problem"); "Leck Mich Am Arsch" ("Lick My Ass"); and "I'm Your Best Friend. I Kill You for Nothing. Bosnie '94."

continue to suffer from structural devastation, bombing damage, and vandalism as well as the ravages of time and weather (Figures 6.13 & 6.14). These buildings include the former Dutchbat medical wing as well as the five-floor administrative building containing the canteen, sleeping quarters, recreational rooms, and bathing facilities (Figures 6.15 & 6.16). More graffiti is located inside the Warehouse as well as in the Spomen Soba's side rooms close to where the "Everyday Srebrenica" display is located (Figure 6.17). The Memorial's hesitation to preserve this other graffiti is perhaps connected to its inertia about how to protect the parts of the property's memory that might be unsavory or taboo. This builds upon E. Zerubavel's argument that, "What society expects us to ignore is often articulated in the form of strict taboos against looking, listening, and speaking."<sup>584</sup>

There are different kinds of marks: social and political commentary using neutral and/or offensive words and/or pictures; military logos; cartoon characters; general signage; random scrawls; and sexualized imagery (Figure 6.18). Indeed, a large percentage of what is left is certainly terrible: misogynist and pornographic drawings of nude women dominate (Figure 6.19). Yet, that does not account for the symbols to map the enclave, to document experiences, and to pass the time (Figures 6.20 & 6.21). What you find is a trove of messages about sex, power, and authority as well as boredom, stupidity, frustration, and resignation. It is when we start to look at the totality of this mostly hand-drawn content that it is possible to see a more comprehensive snapshot of the mindset on the peacekeeping base.<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> E. Zerubavel 2006, 26.

<sup>585</sup> Back in 2011, I accompanied a researcher working with two former Dutchbat soldiers on a tour of these withering rooms. Both soldiers brought the medical wing and the administrative buildings to life by overlaying their own memories within an atmosphere long defined by absence

At a more theoretical level, these kinds of marks can create new levels of awareness, enabling us to intuit more about the specific context in which they were created. The drawings made by children in Auschwitz-Birkenau, for example, fill in a gap between what happened to the children *after* they disembarked from the cattle cars but *before* they were slaughtered.<sup>586</sup> Inside one of the barracks that housed children (in Auschwitz II-Birkenau), there are a couple of colorful albeit faded wall drawings (e.g., one of which shows young people going to school) which sit in stark contrast to the horrific living conditions they endured there. While the barrack itself has been mostly left in its original state, a sheet of Plexiglas has been placed over these drawings. Other illustrations created by children form an integral part of the revamped Israeli pavilion in Block 27 (Auschwitz I) that opened in 2013. The hand-drawn tracings of the original works reveal a range of feelings about what the children felt, saw, and experienced.<sup>587</sup> They also deconstruct one thread of the palimpsest that forms the site's memory.

At the Srebrenica Memorial, Dutchbat's graffiti reflects the complicated aesthetics of an international peacekeeping force deployed to save a desperate population. They also reveal a hierarchy of signals: of contempt for locals, of soldiers trying to pass the time,

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and speculation. One of the veterans drew "Beavis and Butt-head," explaining that his purpose was to lighten the atmosphere in what was then the recreation room. The other showed us a large hand drawn map of the enclave that included the locations of all the UN Outposts. They found the wall featuring numerous outlines of hands, including their own, to show us where they slept as well as markings on the former hospital's ceiling that listed the towns where some of the other peacekeepers had been stationed. Van den Berg said he had tried for over ten years to get the Memorial's staff to fix "Beavis and Butt-head" to no avail. Phone interview, Dion van den Berg, PAX, September 5, 2016.

<sup>586</sup> Insights based on my two visits to the camp in 2011 (on a private guided tour) and 2017 (as part of the Auschwitz Jewish Center's 2017 Fellowship program).

<sup>587</sup> The exhibition is entitled "Traces of Life: The World of Children." See Yad Vashem's webpage, "SHOAH: The New Permanent Exhibition in Block 27 at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum." [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/pavilion\\_auschwitz/children.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/pavilion_auschwitz/children.asp). Accessed July 2, 2018.

and of young men starved for sex (Figures 6.22 & 6.23). Beyond the battalion insignia, there are other illustrations, letterings, and messages in the administrative building, some of which are cartoon-like with or without weapons, with or without alcohol, and with or without women (Figures 6.24, 6.25, & 6.26). More emblems from Dutchbat's various units adorn the administrative building and former medical wing. They continue the pattern of official military markings on the walls in the Dutch Exhibit as well as inside the Warehouse. These are flattened representations of the soldiers' general mindset as well as about the local population that pervaded the base.<sup>588</sup>

On the ground floor of the deteriorating hospital wing is a doorway where "Sexbar" appears, along with an accompanying arrow pointing towards a now decrepit staircase (Figures 6.27 & 6.28). What makes "Sexbar" stand out from the other graffiti at the Memorial is that it illuminates the grey. It speaks to the illicit and sexually exploitive relationships between an international army ostensibly there to protect an endangered population.<sup>589</sup> However, trying to parcel out the specifics of Dutchbat's sexual relations

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<sup>588</sup> These attitudes only worsened from DB1 to DB2 and DB3. which according to the NIOD Report, was due to a host of issues related to the deteriorating conditions in the enclave, the arrival of soldiers with minimal military preparation, virtually no cultural training, and an almost non-existent understanding of the poor psychological condition gripping the besieged population. See NIOD 2002, 1016-1019 for DB3-specific issues; 1174-1176 on cultural misunderstanding.

<sup>589</sup> These relationships could have been sought after proactively (both parties voluntarily engaging in sex); conducted transactionally (women bartering sex for goods or money to help their families); initiated unwillingly (male family members offering sex with their female relatives in exchange for goods, protection, or money); or through outright force (assault and rape). Local women did work at the compound in legitimate housekeeping and other service-related jobs just as there were female peacekeepers; some photographs of local women are included in the Dutch Exhibit. There is mention in the NIOD Report of one higher ranking officer referring to several young women working in the compound as his daughters as a way to protect them. See NIOD 2002, 1153-1154, 1252. The involvement of UN employees associated with SFOR; the UN Mission in Bosnia's International Police Task Force (IPTF); and DynCorp (the UN's independent policing contractor) in the sex trafficking trade in Bosnia beginning around 1995 is well documented. Bolkovac's 2011 book, *The Whistleblower*, was the basis for the fictionalized film also of the same name starring Rachel Weisz. On the subject of sex trafficking by UN Peacekeepers, see HRW 2002 and Westendorf and Searle 2017.



with Srebrenica's wartime female population be it through prostitution, barter, rape, and/or other forms of assault is nearly impossible.<sup>590</sup> A few of my interviewees mentioned the existence of this practice in some form or another. According to Džidić, talking about the sex trafficking that went on is simply not an acceptable topic of discussion.<sup>591</sup> The culture of near silence around this particular sexualized aspect of Srebrenica could be one of reason why "Sexbar" has been left to its quiet demise.

Visitors and vandals have also left their own marks on the buildings. Some have scratched their names into the walls while others have left bigoted graffiti in their wake, such as when the VRS, while occupying the site after UNPROFOR left, carved the four c's symbol into one of the rooms now immortalized in the Dutch Exhibit (Figure 6.29). In other words, some of the shocking graffiti may or may not even belong to Dutchbat. These marks wind up become part of the story; they change the site's original meaning while creating a new one. They also represent a layering of memories, experiences, and voices across space and time. For example, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the nail scratch marks on the walls inside Gas Chamber 1 (in Auschwitz I) are from visitors. The strong impression is that they were left by the desperate victims in their final moments before asphyxiation. The spreading of this misinformation across the internet is something the site's staff must combat on a daily basis.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>590</sup> References to Dutchbat soldiers' paying/bartering women for sex as well as accusations of rape are briefly mentioned. See NIOD 2002, 1241, 1252.

<sup>591</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, *Balkan Insight*, August 12, 2016.

<sup>592</sup> A similar issue concerns the handprints inside one of the now renovated toilet barracks (in Auschwitz II-Birkenau). Discussion during the guided tour of the site as part of the Auschwitz Jewish Center's 2017 Fellowship program.

### Abandoned Memories: The Mass Grave

The Memorial's silence around the mass grave on its property embodies the contradictions between treating it as a *lieux de mémoire* versus allowing its memory to recede (Figure 6.30). In Bosnia, competitive ethnicized memorialization flourishes, in part, because the country is littered with atrocity sites in one form or another virtually everywhere you look. If each one is to be marked in a society still at war over the past, then how can they be expected to move forward when the landscape is flooded with reminders? In Srebrenica's case, though, there is an active focus on erasing the crime scenes which heightens the emotional charge of these sites.

Ferrándiz and Robben argue that, "Former mass graves become *lieux de mémoire* at the same time as communities and families re-appropriate the exhumed bodies through mortuary and reburial rituals."<sup>593</sup> Exhuming mass graves in Bosnia does not take place in isolation. It is one of the most visceral types of post-conflict justice that play out in local communities far away from the institutional glare of courtroom lights. It is also a kind of morbid performance conducted by forensic experts often (but not always) observed by survivors hoping for some sort of physical trace of their kin.

After the ICTY, Wagner argues that the creation of the ICMP was a second powerful transitional justice mechanism designed to help facilitate Bosnia's recovery by identifying the dead irrespective of their ethnic identity.<sup>594</sup> It has been a herculean task to retrieve forensic evidence bone by bone because of the reckless way that the VRS dug up the primary mass graves, creating a web of secondary and tertiary mass graves to locate

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<sup>593</sup> Ferrándiz and Robben 2015, 15.

<sup>594</sup> Wagner 2011, 33-34. For extensive analyses on the process of exhuming and identifying the dead, see Wagner 2008 (on Srebrenica) and Renshaw 2011 (on Spain).

and untangle. DNA samples were also collected from the diaspora spread around the world to aid in the identification process.

This grave's existence had long been rumored and previous attempts to determine its exact location failed, often blamed on the faulty and reluctant memories of the three Dutchbat soldiers who dug the grave. In August 2012, members of MPI and ICMP finally discovered it, which coincided with former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's first visit to Srebrenica just a few weeks beforehand on June 26, 2012.<sup>595</sup> This mass grave was different: it contained the remains of five adults and one-day old baby, Fatima Muhić (as she was posthumously named), who all died between July 11 and July 16, 1995 on or near the premises of the peacekeeping compound. While the specific causes of death were unknown at the time, we do know that they were not killed by anyone in Dutchbat.<sup>596</sup> The soldiers in question wrapped each victim in a blanket. Meaning: when the bodies were exhumed, they were mostly intact (Figure 6.31).<sup>597</sup> By 2015, this grass, close to the border of the adjacent Bos-Agro Food Warehouse, had fully grown back (Figure 6.32). Only someone acutely familiar with the landscape would notice the bumps in the ground. There is no marker; during the commemoration, cars and buses park there. It is as if the grave never existed.<sup>598</sup>

What are the motivations and/or actors behind the decision to silence this grave and memory? The RS authorities and many local Bosnian Serb residents intentionally make it difficult for Bośniak survivors to access Srebrenica's execution sites and mass grave

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<sup>595</sup> United Nations 2012.

<sup>596</sup> Hadžović and Vukojević 2011 and 2017.

<sup>597</sup> The bodies were buried during the 2013 commemoration with baby Fatima leading the story.

<sup>598</sup> As of 2016, it was not mentioned in the Spomen Soba nor would it be appropriate in the SENSE Center which is based solely upon ICTY documentation. To the best of my knowledge, the grave is also not discussed in the Dutch Exhibit.

locations. Only a single memorial plaque identifies the Nova Kasaba site; the rest remain unmarked (Figure 6.33). Temporary mass grave markers dot the *marš mira*'s path enabling thousands of hikers to witness these locations firsthand yet these signs must also be removed as soon as the event ends.

The Memorial's original foundation on some level was about rebuilding and recovering what had been so meticulously ravaged and erased.<sup>599</sup> As a *lieux de mémoire*, this grave is doubly potent. Silence about it only serves to hurt the Memorial's credibility in the same way the site glosses over the controversies about who is buried there. Perhaps abandoning its memory is indicative of an underlying tension about how the victims died and who is responsible. All the other Srebrenica-related mass graves were filled with the bodies of people murdered by the VRS. Commemorating those sites is inherently about politically and emotionally reclaiming the spaces. The people in the Dutch grave were not murdered by the peacekeepers nor do we know exactly how they sustained their fatal injuries. I argue that this enforced silence is related to the Dutch's problematic intervention at the site that speaks to the complexities of managing controversial memories that fall outside of the site's reparative purview.

### **Taboo Memories: Gendered Silences**

If the tragedy of the genocide logically belongs to the men, the story of the Memorial's foundation belongs to the women. Even if we set aside the controversial and traumatic issue of the mass rapes, talking about the women's ordeals remains highly restricted.<sup>600</sup> The unacknowledged gendered traces of the atrocity's memory are worth exploring despite however uncomfortable, taboo, or painful they may be.

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<sup>599</sup> Wagner 2011.

<sup>600</sup> Personal interview, Anne-Marie Esper-Larsen, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

For example, Dachau is filled with numerous tributes, monuments, smaller memorials, and plaques. They represent the spectrum of diverse groups that suffered as well as the different political ideologies of the various stakeholders who occupied the property following site's liberation.<sup>601</sup> Dachau was predominantly a concentration camp for political prisoners, the majority of which included Christian clergymen as well as ideological opponents of the Third Reich (initially from Germany and then from other conquered European countries).<sup>602</sup> An elaborate system of multi-colored triangular symbols was used throughout Nazi concentration, forced labor, and extermination camps to identify the complex categories of prisoners.<sup>603</sup>

In 1968, a glass monument of these configurations was unveiled on a wall right near Nandor Gild's iconic barbed wire sculpture. It contains all of the symbols that were in use in 1937 at Dachau with the exception of three colors: black (for "asocial" people); green (for "criminals"); and pink (for homosexuals). Only categories of prisoners "accepted as "recognized" persecuted groups after 1945" were included; the rest were considered "forgotten victims."<sup>604</sup> According to Sierp, the Comité International de Dachau (CID), a group of former political prisoners that became active stakeholders at the site, unfortunately replicated the same traumatic ideological and segregationist policies to which they had been subjected. When I toured the site in 2015, these three triangles

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<sup>601</sup> The number of Jewish prisoners increased substantially during mass arrests on November 9, 1938 (*Kristallnacht*). These numbers fell as the Jews were deported to Poland for extermination. They rose towards the war's end as the Russians liberated the Eastern front, forcing the Nazis to ship emaciated Jewish inmates back to Germany.

<sup>602</sup> Young 1993, 60-61.

<sup>603</sup> For example, political prisoners wore an inverted red triangle while convicts wore inverted green ones. In nearly all cases, an additional yellow triangle was added as a secondary classification to denote those inmates who were also Jews (creating the shape of a Jewish star).

<sup>604</sup> Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site. <https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de/stop13.html>. Accessed July 1, 2018.

remained empty, reflecting Sierp's insights about how the long-term damage of Nazi persecution affects "present-day practices of remembering and memory politics."<sup>605</sup>

The literature devoted to Bosnian women's wartime and post-war experiences provides a pointed counterbalance to the cultural silences that inhibit discussion about their ordeals as well as minimize their agency. For example, reports about survivors of sexual violence emphasize the ongoing political, cultural, and psychological repercussions, including domestic violence, they routinely face. Gendered socio-economic analyses document the challenges wrought upon female heads of household in the absence and/or incapacity of their men. Other studies focus on their resilience, becoming community and social justice activists, out of necessity, frustration, and/or inspiration.<sup>606</sup>

The two-dimensional treatment of Srebrenica's female survivors in the Spomen Soba and Dutch Exhibit are reflective of the challenges in representing the depth of women's experiences that were interwoven throughout the war (Figure 6.34).<sup>607</sup> These gendered

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<sup>605</sup> Interest in and activism for the "forgotten victims" began in the 1980s. The gay community successfully lobbied for the inclusion of a pink triangle inside the prayer room elsewhere on the site in 1995. No other steps have been taken on behalf of the other groups (Sierp 2016, 330-331).

<sup>606</sup> On cultural silences, see Eastmond and Selimović 2012. On sexual violence, see Simić 2017 and 2018. On mental health challenges, see Baraković et al. 2013. On gendered forms of justice, see Björkdahl and Selimović 2014 and 2015; Šoštarić 2012; and Volčič and Simić 2013. On post-war activism, see Helms 2010 and 2013 and O'Reilly 2018.

<sup>607</sup> Carpenter (2003) argues that the international community's operational norm of prioritizing the evacuation of women and children, unfortunately, inhibited efforts to protect male civilians who were acknowledged as being a much higher at-risk population (e.g., they were more likely to be murdered). Helms (2012, 202-203) provides a nuanced analysis of the ICTY's Krstić decision. She argues that the Prosecution's case (e.g., destroying the male population would decimate the community, thus constituting genocide) was premised on "unquestioned" Orientalist views of Bosnia's Muslim population. In this case, it was the assumption that the patriarchal norms prevalent in the rural areas would prevent women from establishing new families and leading the community. A lengthier discussion about the genocide's gendered components is outside the study's scope. See also Joeden-Forgey 2012.

silences stem from at least three phenomena.<sup>608</sup> The first is the complex relationship between the exceptional levels of wartime physical and sexual violence that men waged across women's bodies as well as the normalization of this power to achieve nationalist aims.<sup>609</sup> The second derives from how Bosnian cultural and religious norms reinforce patriarchal boundaries that impact what can and cannot be said as well as accentuate the more rigid expressions of these customs in rural areas.<sup>610</sup> Finally, there is the centrality of situating women's victimhood, as Helms argues, within claims of "moral purity" and "absolute innocence."<sup>611</sup>

Much of what happened to Srebrenica's women on the buses and afterwards in Tuzla is public knowledge. They were frequently stopped and harassed by the VRS; were forced off the buses and made to walk for long distances in dangerous terrain; and were robbed repeatedly of what little belongings they had left. It is also possible that some were sexually assaulted somewhere along the journey. Their experiences at the Tuzla airbase were harrowing for other reasons—left to sleep on the pavement, crowded into the air hanger, collectively in shock and dismay. However, there is scant mention about their experiences in any of the exhibitions.<sup>612</sup> The Dutch Exhibit features individual copy

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<sup>608</sup> An expanded discussion about the intersections between gender, feminism, innocence, nation building, victimhood, morality, and sexual violence exceeds the scope of this study. For an excellence analysis of these themes, see Helms 2013.

<sup>609</sup> Helms 2013, 34-35, 56. Sexual violence was also waged by men against men, often instigated by soldiers who threatened prisoners with death if they did not comply with their grotesque and often barbarous demands. These included male family members being forced to rape, cannibalize, and/or castrate each other. Discussion about this violence is highly stigmatized. Duško Tadić's trial at the ICTY focused on the crimes committed in the Omarska concentration camp (outside of Prijedor) where the VRS tortured and murdered Bośniak prisoners. See ICTY. "Tadić (IT-94-1)." Patricia McGowan Wald (2004), one of the ICTY's judges who presided over this trial, also wrote an article analyzing the case.

<sup>610</sup> Helms 2013, 36, 136-137.

<sup>611</sup> Helms 2013, 11.

<sup>612</sup> A point that came out of a discussion with Davorka Turk, CNA, August 2, 2016.

boards about the genocide's aftermath, including the ICTY's trials, the ICMP, the memorial's establishment, and the community's struggles to regenerate itself. However, an in-depth look at the women's own ordeals remains unexplored.<sup>613</sup> The question is does this story fit within the Memorial's narrative of the genocide, and if so, where?

Several interviewees spoke about the cultural silences around talking about pain: it is bad form (for both genders) to complain when others have suffered more.<sup>614</sup> This is all the more acute for the women living in a highly patriarchal society that uses shame as silencing mechanism. When you are violated as a woman, Turk commented, "you" provoked it and the "right way to deal with it" is to kill yourself. In this way, it is entirely possible that Ferida did everything right, she wryly noted.<sup>615</sup> Džidić told me that he has gone to hundreds of trials and that only a handful of women were willing to testify. The rest, he said, wanted protection which could also be connected to why their stories are not reflected at the Memorial.<sup>616</sup> They survived and so have no right to complain; no one wants to hear about their own struggles in the face of such overwhelming tragedy.<sup>617</sup>

Miličević spoke at length about how women's stories are not shared with their husbands or families as a way of marginalizing them. It makes their experiences invisible, enabling their men to pretend to ignore what happened.<sup>618</sup> During my meeting

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<sup>613</sup> It is worth noting that the experiences of Dutchbat's female peacekeepers, to the best of my knowledge, are not represented in the exhibition.

<sup>614</sup> Personal interviews: Dženana Karup-Druško, Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016; Jadranka Miličević, Fondacija CURE, August 12, 2016; Davorka Turk, CNA, August 2, 2016; and Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>615</sup> Personal interview, Davorka Turk, CNA, August 2, 2016.

<sup>616</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>617</sup> Personal interview, Davorka Turk, CNA, August 2, 2016.

<sup>618</sup> Personal interview, Jadranka Miličević, Fondacija CURE, August 12, 2016. Subašić told me that the authorities, nearly all of whom are men, will say to the women, "Why didn't you rebuild your house?" Then they will comment on how the women are alone but no one asks why—because they are dead. So, she said, the killers use the women's properties while the women still



with Hajra in 2016, it was clear that issues at the site were not as pressing as they once were. She focused mostly on her frustration that Nino and others are still missing. However, when I asked her where the stories of the women were at the Memorial, she said that the site offers them a place to pray to find some release.<sup>619</sup>

The identities and stories of what the women underwent are also oriented around their relationship with as well as reactions to what happened to their men. Use of heteronormative conceptions about identity as an organizing principle was by design when it became clear in the genocide's aftermath they needed to band together. According to Wagner, the women believed their voices would be valued more by referring to themselves as mothers and survivors rather than as victims.<sup>620</sup>

The site's installations only emphasize their suffering in the abstract. Yet the other side of their story, the one that is actually the most profound part of their legacy, remains hidden. Where are the photos of the early commemorations? Where is an extended mention of their activism? While aspects of this may be interwoven in the Dutch Exhibit, it is one of many tangential threads crowded into an already complex installation. The exhibitions feature many stereotypical images of women set in juxtaposition to the dead—walking amongst the coffins, lamenting over the graves, and looking forlorn across the cemetery (Figure 6.35). Others show them in grave distress. As Helms writes,

Mention women and Bosnia and your first association is likely to be one of two iconic images: distraught women in headscarves and traditional Muslim dress fleeing ethnic cleansing, their ragged children and few belongings in tow; or the shamed and silenced young Muslim victim of rape and forced pregnancy, doubly victimized by her attackers and then by her own patriarchal community.<sup>621</sup>

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have to pay the taxes even though they themselves are unable to use the land. Personal interview, Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, August 15, 2016.

<sup>619</sup> Personal interview, Hajra Ćatić, Women of Srebrenica, September 2, 2016.

<sup>620</sup> Wagner 2008, 67.

<sup>621</sup> Helms 2013, 25.

For example, in the Spomen Soba, one particular image by Ron Haviv shows a woman in traditional dress with outstretched arms and head tilted back who is wailing as a peacekeeper stands close by (Figure 6.36).<sup>622</sup> A colleague of mine explained that men who survived the *marš smrti* were beginning to arrive in the free territory. This woman was imploring them to provide any news about her missing kin; he knows this because he was one of those men. The lack of a broader context to accompany this photo robs us of the particulars taking place in that exact moment. It also reduces the woman's portrayal to stereotypical hysteria as though she simply wandered onto the road and dramatically broke down. Is this an intentional or unintentional omission?

Even the most obvious questions for non-Muslim visitors about why the women in the photos are wearing certain clothes is left unanswered (Figure 6.37). Many refugees in Srebrenica were from rural areas where there was a greater tendency to wear more traditional forms of dress, including *dimije* (baggy trousers) and the *hijab* (headscarves), especially in public areas as well as in religious spaces.<sup>623</sup> The wearing of the *hijab* or some other head covering inside the cemetery is also a sign of respect practiced by both secular women and visitors (although not everyone chooses to do so). These images paint a very specific picture of the women as pious survivors even though they do not reflect the way a large majority of the population, especially in urban centers, dress.

These silences may have been part of the social fabric in the Podrinje before the war, especially amongst this particular generation of women. As one interviewee who spent years working with the Mothers explained, many of them did not finish school, instead

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<sup>622</sup> This photo is one of many that are relocated elsewhere in the Warehouse for dramatic effect during the commemoration.

<sup>623</sup> Helms 2013, 83 and Wagner 2008, 75.

spending their lives tending to the hearth and home, where opportunities outside of marriage and family were limited. July 1995 quite literally reshaped their worlds—not only in terms of what and who they lost, but also in finding and then learning how to leverage their voices on the international stage. It is a core group of these same women who sit on the Memorial’s Advisory Working Group.

### *Silences around Sexual Violence*

We know from news reports, the accounts of a few brave survivors, and ICTY documentation, that there were women from Srebrenica who were raped during July 1995.<sup>624</sup> Finding other sources about the horrors Srebrenica’s women experienced, specifically sexual violence, is difficult because of the community’s intense culture of enforced silence around it.<sup>625</sup> Even the British organization, Remembering Srebrenica, which devoted a full year to highlighting the intersection between gender and genocide, only includes the interviews of two women from the actual community.<sup>626</sup> As Mamut pointed out, we never hear about the rapes in Srebrenica because the emphasis is on the suffering of Bošniak men and national losses.<sup>627</sup> Much of the discourse on wartime mass rapes also focuses on where notorious rape camps existed, such as in Foča (where survivors testified in the ICTY resulting in a landmark case declaring rape as a weapon of war) and in Višegrad (where the infamous rape camp, the Vilina Vlas Hotel, reopened to tourists using some of the same furniture).<sup>628</sup> Esper-Larsen sardonically told me that there

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<sup>624</sup> ICTY. “Case Information Sheet “Srebrenica-Drina Corps” IT-98-33: Radislav Krstić.”

<sup>625</sup> Ahmetašević 2010 and Leydesdorff 2011.

<sup>626</sup> Remembering Srebrenica 2017.

<sup>627</sup> Personal interview, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. Sixteen women testified in the ICTY trials related to the mass rapes in Foča. Their heroism was the focus of the first episode, “I Came to Testify” that was part of the PBS documentary series, “Women, War and Peace” produced by Pamela Hogan. See PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/full-episodes/i-came-to-testify/>. Accessed

is more money spent on people conducting research about sexual violence in Bosnia than on supporting the survivors themselves.<sup>629</sup>

In a war that introduced the concept of rape camps into international consciousness, how does it happen that there is no mention of sexual violence, even generically, inside the Memorial?<sup>630</sup> Particular kinds of violence against men are foregrounded: we see pictures and footage of men who have been captured and injured as well as their skeletons, bones, and skulls. The display of their violated bodies is intimately connected to Srebrenica's narrative of victimization, similar to how their coffins are treated during the commemoration. These images work on several levels: to prove the atrocity has taken place; to demand action on the part of the viewer; and to crystallize the essence of a war's brutality in a single frame, according to Sontag.<sup>631</sup>

However, if violence against the female body is such a taboo subject in Srebrenica's case, then why is Ferida's picture inside the Spomen Soba at all (with a smaller version inside the Dutch Exhibit)? I argue that the implicit message is about exploitation in the same way that the men's bones are fetishized (Figures 6.38a & 6.38b). In the latter, we at least have a story, however depersonalized it may be at times, of what happened. No such courtesy has been granted to Ferida even though her body is arguably subjugated to elicit visitors' gasps. Sontag points out this irony, noting that, "The problem is not that people remember through photographs but that they remember only the photographs. This

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February 25, 2018. On the Foča rape-specific trials, see ICTY. "Case Information Sheet: "Foča" IT-96-23 and 23/1) Kunarac, Kovač and Vuković." On the Vilina Vlas Hotel, see also Graham-Harrison 2018.

<sup>629</sup> Personal interview, Anne-Marie Esper-Larsen, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>630</sup> See Jacobs 2017.

<sup>631</sup> Sontag 2002.

remembering through photographs eclipses other forms of understanding—and remembering.”<sup>632</sup>

To be fair, Munira did raise the general topic of wartime sexual violence, providing me with a short documentary film produced in partnership with the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide as well as Exit Media.<sup>633</sup> Both she and Miličević were also instrumental in the 2016 Women’s Court.<sup>634</sup> It is unclear, though, if she is going to become the kind of public advocate for Srebrenica’s survivors of sexual assault and rape which exist for survivors in Foča and Višegrad.

The memorialization of women’s wartime experiences, including sexual violence, is still a topic in its infancy given there are so many other pressing issues affecting women. Many of these are directly connected to the mass rapes (e.g., domestic violence, endemic poverty, and psychological disorders).<sup>635</sup> Female survivors of wartime rape are still fighting for justice, financial reparations, psychological support, and community acceptance. This is a country where it is still considered inflammatory to acknowledge that women of all three ethnicities were raped, including Bosnian Serb women at the hands of Bošniak and Bosnian Croat men.<sup>636</sup> Esper-Larsen pointed out that memorialization remains highly gendered in another way. These are memorials created

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<sup>632</sup> Sontag 2002.

<sup>633</sup> See Remembering Srebrenica 2017 and Udruženje Žrtava i Svjedoka Genocid. *Pucanj u dušu*. <http://tortura.ba>. Accessed January 25, 2018.

<sup>634</sup> A four day Women’s Court was held in Sarajevo 2015 which offered a public platform for female survivors to share their stories. It did not, however, include judges or perpetrators. It was first of its kind in Bosnia and considered more of a symbolic rather than a legal victory. For more information on the initiative, see the Women’s Court-Feminist Approach to Justice’s website. <http://www.zenskisud.org/en/>. Accessed September 9, 2018. See also Clark 2016.

<sup>635</sup> Personal interviews: Davorka Turk, CNA August 2, 2016 and Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>636</sup> Personal interview, Lejla Mamut, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016. See also Helms 2013 and Simić 2017.

by, for, and about men as well as are consumed and refuted by them, something that will take ages, if ever, to resolve. Much of the debate centers on ethnic competition and blame, shifting responsibility away from what happened to the actual victims.<sup>637</sup>

### Images



Figure 6.2: Inside the Warehouse. This space is used as a staging area during the commemoration, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

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<sup>637</sup> Personal interview, Anne-Marie Esper-Larsen, UN Women-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.



Figure 6.3: One of the abandoned rooms inside the Warehouse, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.4: The walkway inside the Warehouse. During the commemoration this space is dramatized as diplomats pass through it, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.5: One of the walls inside the Warehouse. During the commemoration this space is dramatized as diplomats pass through it. In the bottom right corner is the famous picture of Karremans drinking *rakija* with Mladić immediately after Srebrenica fell, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.6: For the 20th anniversary commemoration, pictures of Srebrenica's victims were placed in one of the Warehouse's darker areas as diplomats passed through, 2015. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

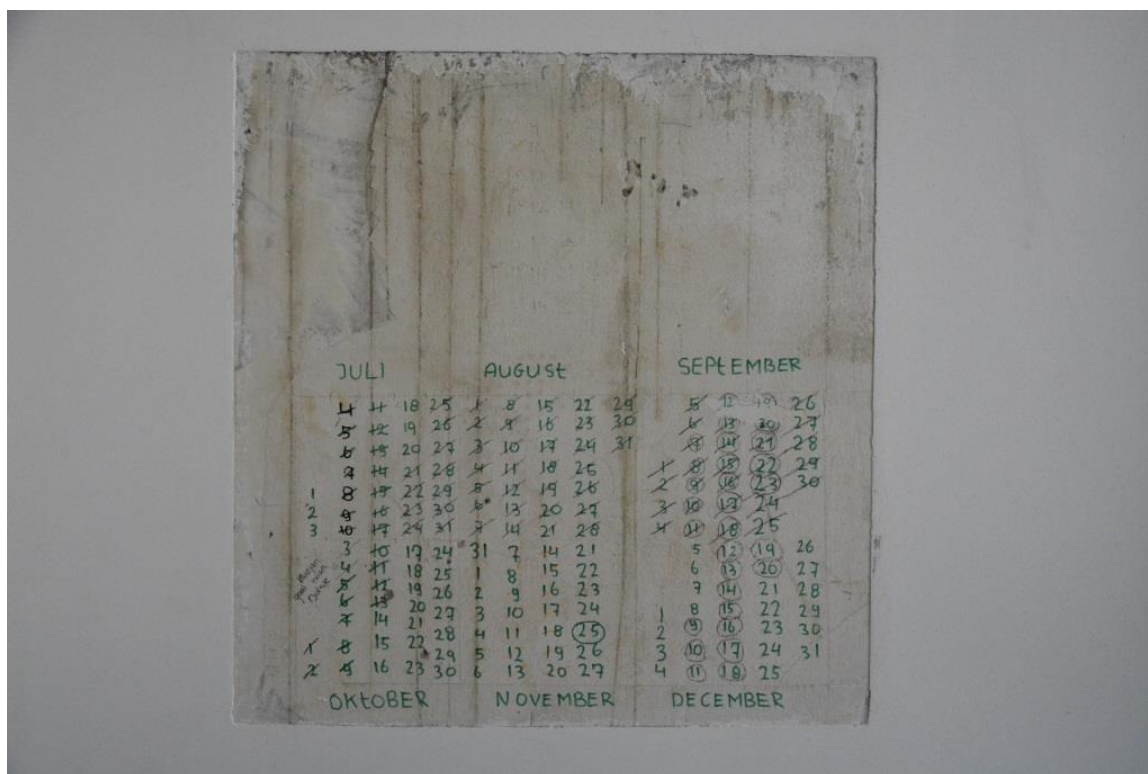


Figure 6.7: Boxed in graffiti that was altered (note the differences in the ink colors in the far left column) inside the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

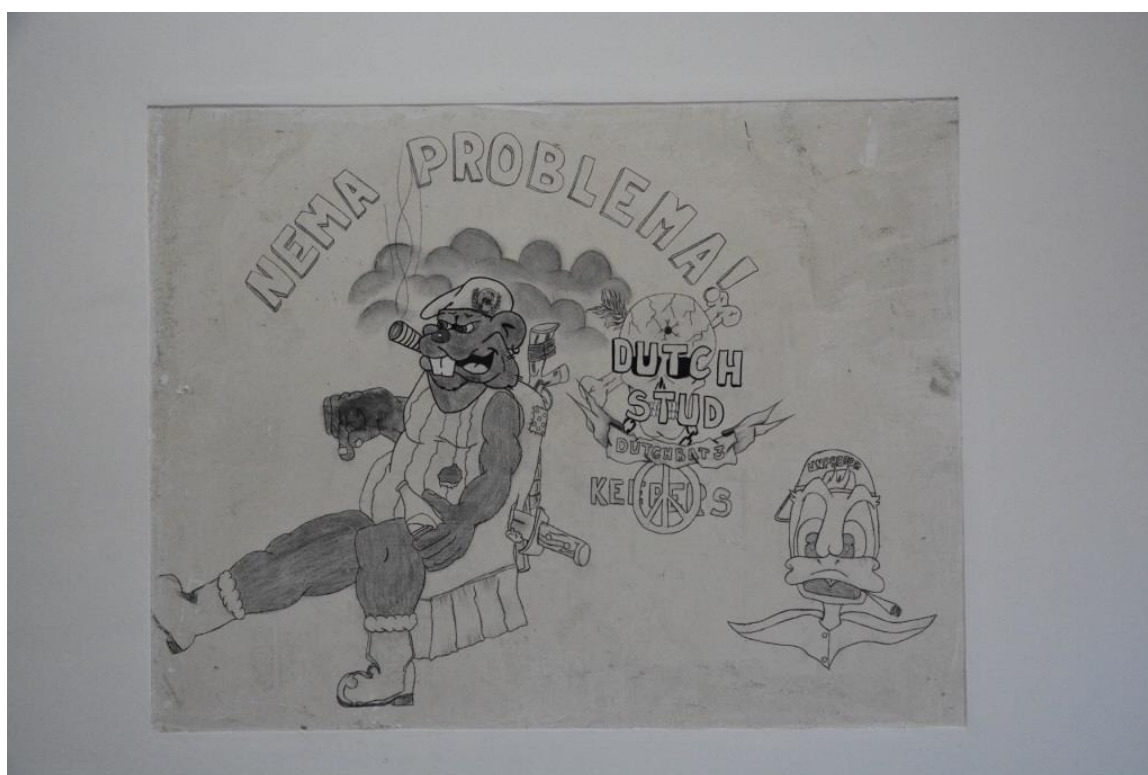


Figure 6.8: Boxed in “Nema Problema” (“No Problem”) graffiti that was altered (note the different ink colors) inside the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.





Figure 6.9: Boxed in carvings of the four C's ("Only Unity Saves the Serbs") inside the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

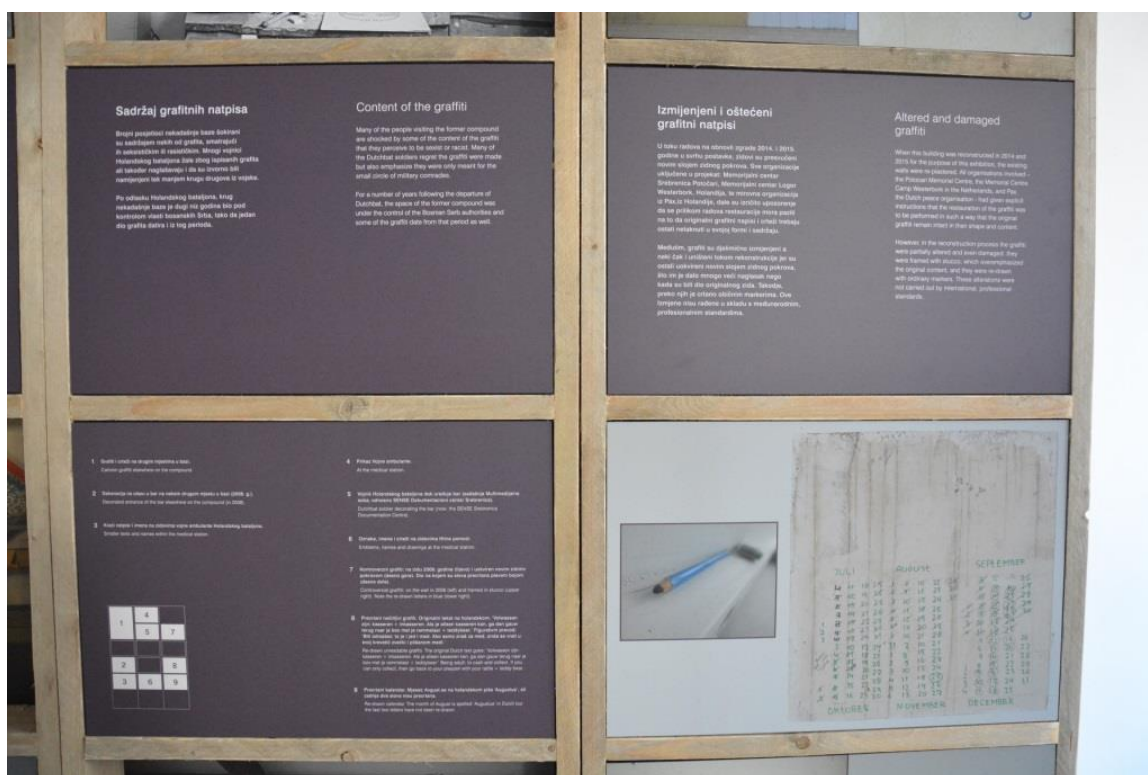


Figure 6.10: Placards inside the Dutch Exhibit explaining the content and alteration of the graffiti. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

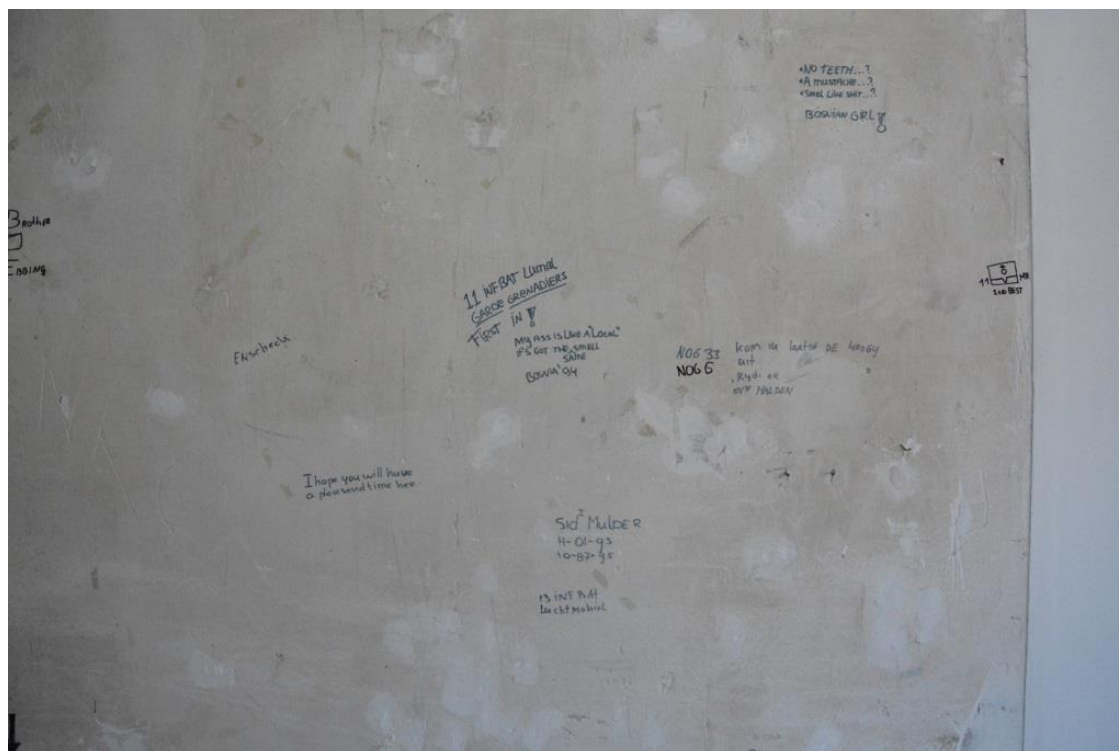


Figure 6.11: Boxed in graffiti that has been altered (note the different ink colors). “Bosnian Girl” is the upper right corner and “My Ass is Like a Local” is the center of the frame, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 6.12: Original “My Ass is Like a Local” graffiti, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.13: Ground floor room with pornographic graffiti inside the former medical wing that is exposed to the elements, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.14: Close-up of pornographic graffiti (located inside the same room as Figure 6.13), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.15: Ground floor of the former medical wing, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.16: Former recreation room (above the medical wing) featuring “Beavis and Butt-head” (far left) as well as battalion logos, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.17: Fading graffiti of a naked woman (upper right) inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.18: Graffiti on the second floor (above the medical wing), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



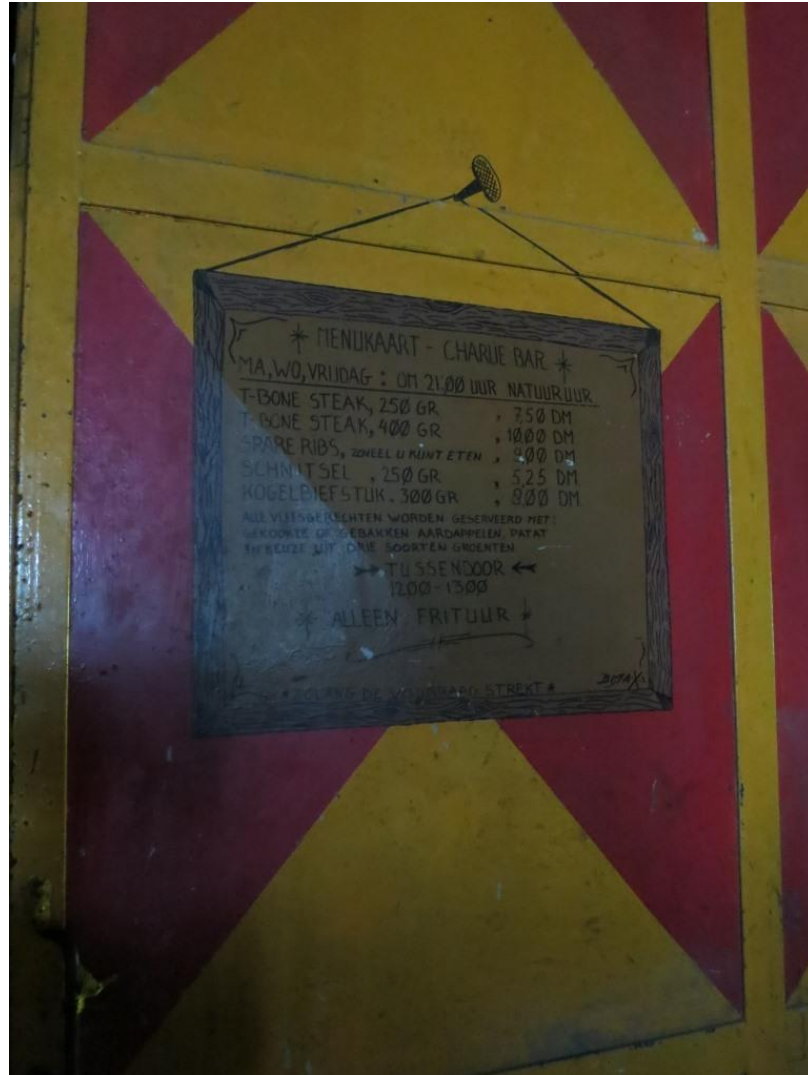


Figure 6.19: “Menukaart—Charlie Bar” signage inside one of the Warehouse’s corridors, 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.

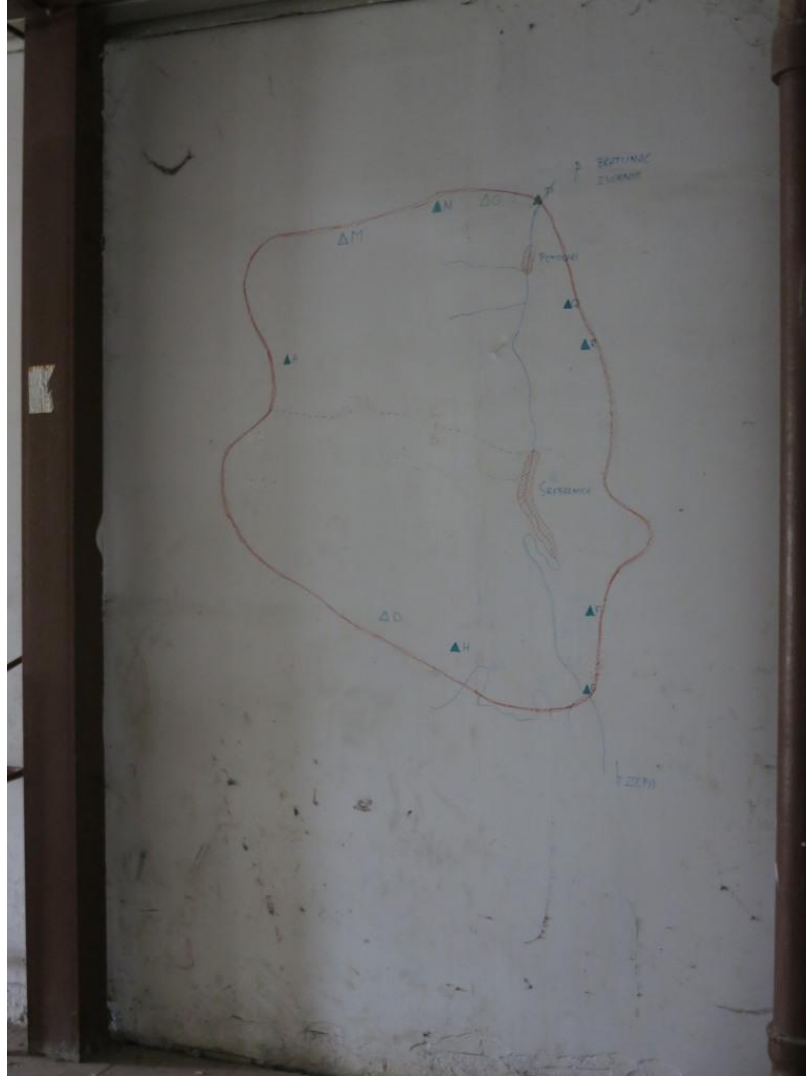


Figure 6.20: Map of the Srebrenica enclave (the triangles are the locations of the UN Outposts) on the second floor (above the medical wing), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.

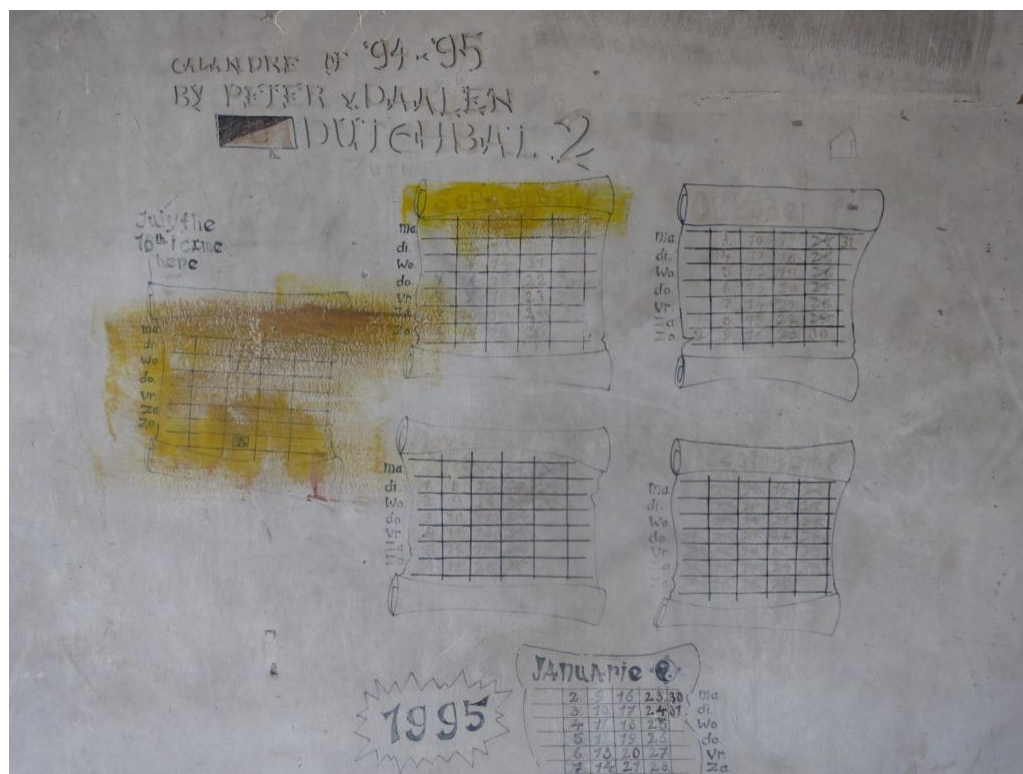


Figure 6.21: Graffiti on the ground floor of the former medical wing, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.22: Graffiti on the second floor (of the administrative buildings), 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.23: Graffiti on the ground floor inside the former medical wing left exposed to the elements, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



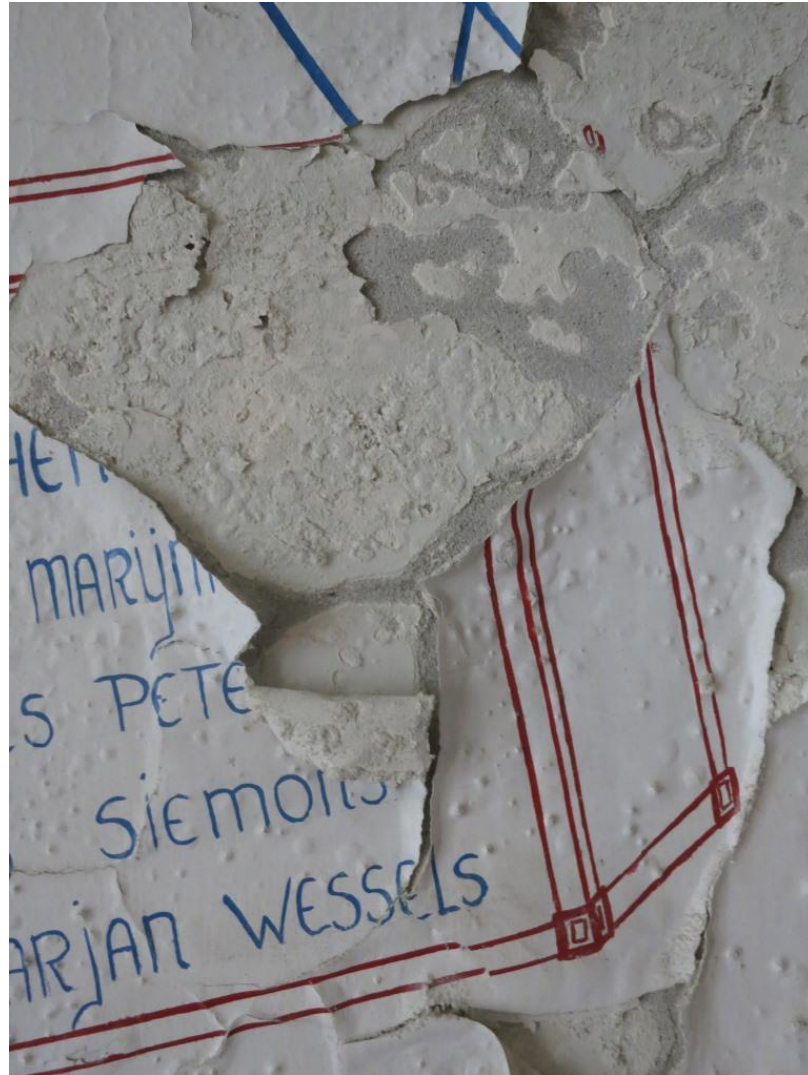


Figure 6.24: Graffiti on the second floor (above the former medical wing), 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.

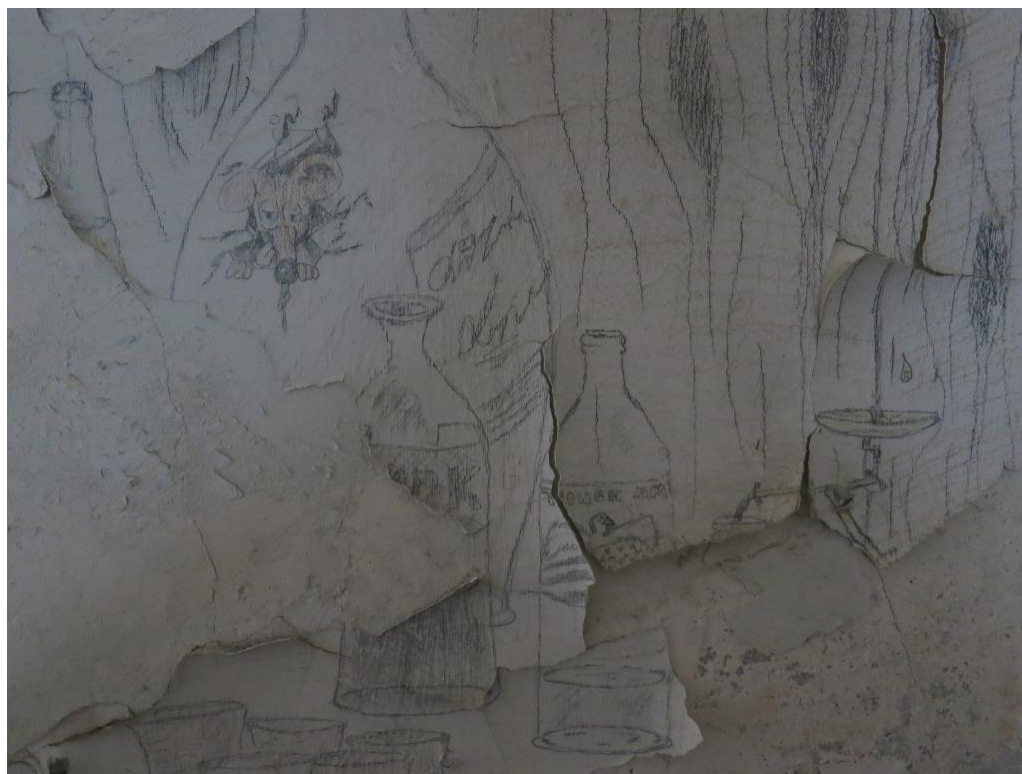


Figure 6.25: Graffiti on the second floor (above the former medical wing), 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.

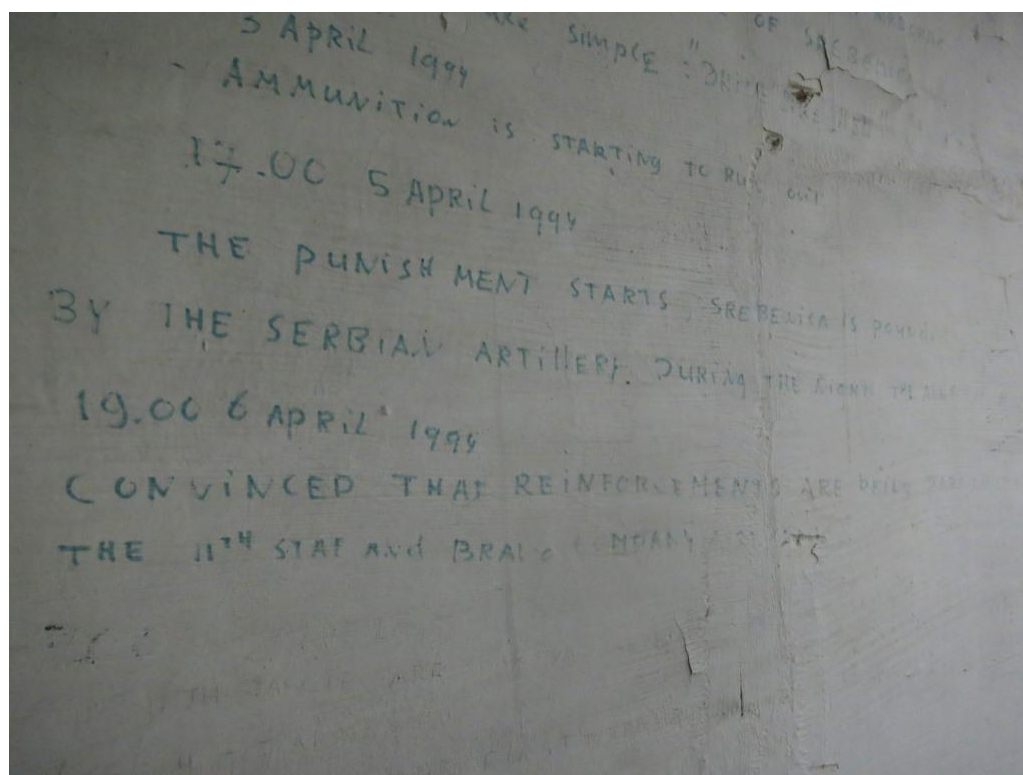


Figure 6.26: Handwritten notes documenting siege of the Srebrenica enclave (circa April 1994), 2016.  
Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.27: "Sexbar" on the ground floor of the former medical wing exposed to the elements, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.28: Hallway on the ground floor of the former medical wing close to "Sexbar," 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.29: “Naser” (referring to Naser Orić) scratched into the walls of the Spomen Soba (on the white wall towards the left). The “Everyday Srebrenica” exhibition is in the far right corner, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.30: Exhuming the mass grave on the Memorial’s property. The Bos-Agro Food Warehouse is in the background, 2012. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.31: Human remains exhumed from the mass grave on the Memorial's property. The bodies were wrapped in blankets which protected their skeletons from scattering, 2012. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.32: New foliage and grass on the site of the now unmarked former mass grave on the Memorial's property. During the commemoration, cars are allowed to park there. The Bos-Agro Food Warehouse is in the background, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.33: Commemorative flowers placed on the memorial plaque at the Nova Kasaba execution site, July 13, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.





Figure 6.34: Wartime image of women inside the Spomen Soba, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.35: Photo of women inside the Great Hall on display inside the Dutch Exhibit, 2017. Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.



Figure 6.36: Ron Haviv's photo of a woman pleading with *marš smrti* survivors to provide news of her kin. This photo is place inside the Warehouse's walkway that diplomats pass through during the commemoration, 2016. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



Figure 6.37: Installation inside the Dutch Exhibit bereft of the women's stories. Saliha Osmanović is in the lower right corner. To her immediate left is a young survivor, Advija Ibrahimović, a rising activist who was also present during the Memorial's 2003 opening ceremony attended by former US President Clinton, 2017.

Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

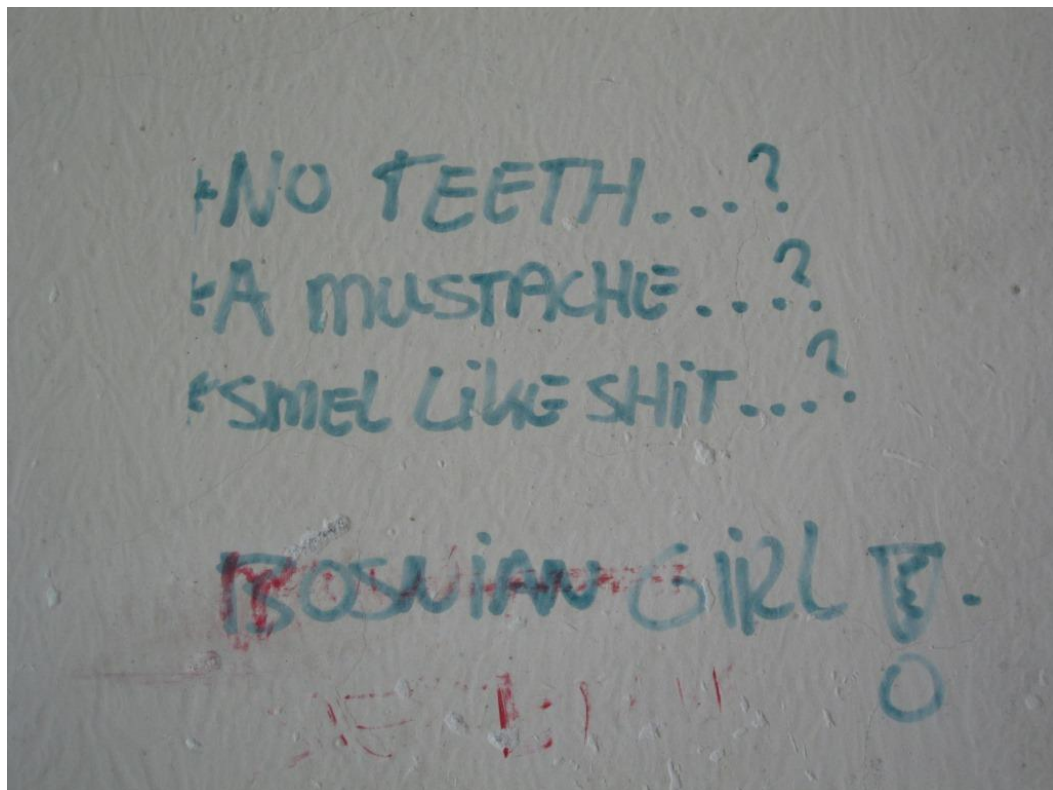


Figure 6.38a: Original "Bosnian Girl" graffiti, 2011. Photograph by Laura Cohen.



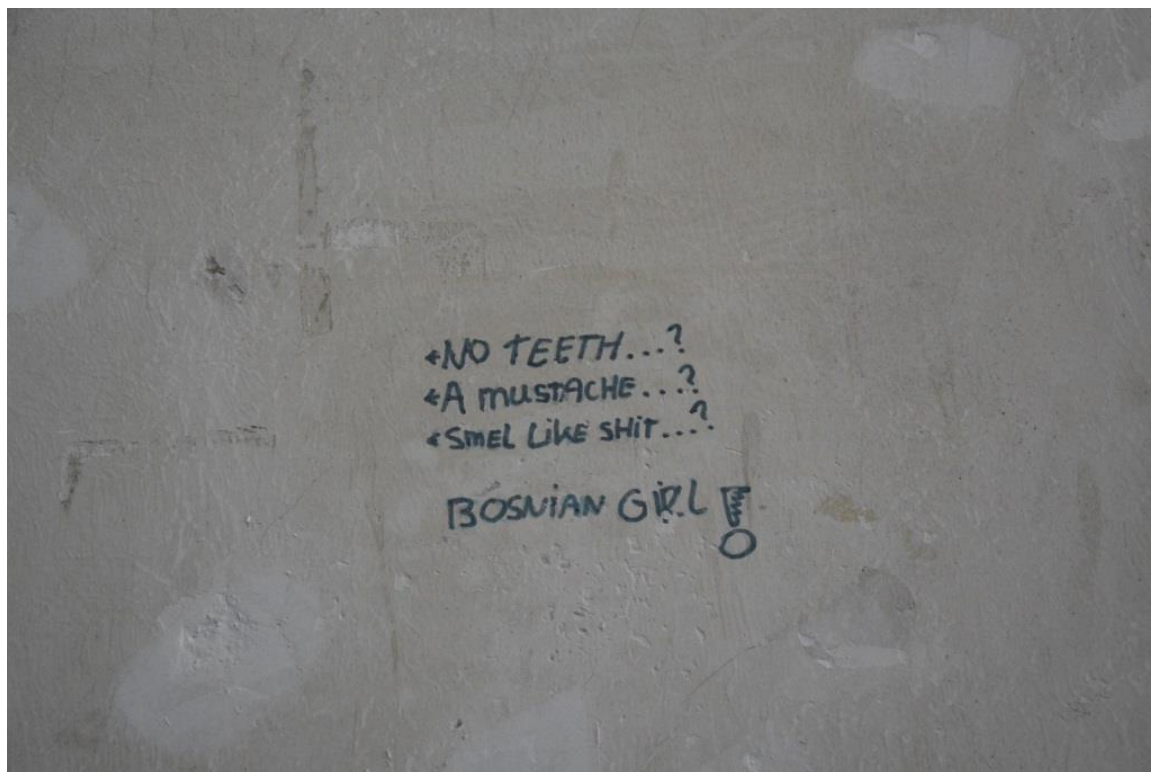


Figure 6.38b: Altered “Bosnian Girl” graffiti (using a black marker) inside the Dutch exhibit.  
Photograph by Marketa Slavkova used with permission.

### **Chapter 7: Conclusion—Through the Looking Glass**

One is tempted to believe that the creature once had some sort of intelligible shape and is now only a broken-down remnant. Yet this does not seem to be the case; at least there is no sign of it; nowhere is there an unfinished or unbroken surface to suggest anything of the kind; the whole thing looks senseless enough, but in its own way perfectly finished. In any case, closer scrutiny is impossible, since Odradek is extraordinarily nimble and can never be laid hold of.

—Franz Kafka  
“The Cares of a Family Man”

### **This Will Destroy You**

There is another Hasan.

His name is Hasan Hasanović and he is a living memorial. Over the years, I have observed small wrinkles appear on his forehead and around his eyes. They are visible markers of the intense pressure he feels to keep the memory of Srebrenica alive.

Hasanović lost his twin brother, Husein, his father, Aziz, and one of his uncles during the *marš smrti*, after getting separated from them in the forest. His younger brother, Omer, along with his mother and grandparents, stayed behind at Potočari, eventually reaching Tuzla by bus. Hasan buried his father in 2003 and brother in 2005 during the early years of what would ultimately become the commemoration. Resistance from the local population was much fiercer back then, forcing the survivors to, yet again, summon tremendous courage to confront the hatred head on.

Hasan is an unsung hero who works tirelessly retelling the story—his story—to school groups, researchers, diplomats, and celebrities. When the press corps visit, they most often interview Hasanović. During the *marš mira*, the nightly programming events are organized by Hasanović. In the frantic days before the commemoration, everyone calls Hasanović.

On July 13, 2016, we travel on a crowded sweltering bus that mimics his escape route, passing by the intersection where the fleeing men were ambushed. We venture deep into the Podrinje visiting the places where countless friends and relatives of his were killed. The sweat beads cascade down his forehead as he shares the unending series of horrors and injustices he suffered during the war. Once while he and his friends were playing football in the schoolyard, a shell exploded. As he regained consciousness, he



saw that many of his mates had been blown to bits. He ran to take cover in a nearby house and watched as a single UN peacekeeping tank arrived on the scene. In that fateful moment, he realized that no one was coming to save them and they were on their own.

At each of the sites we visit, Hasanović describes what happened. Inside Pilica's *Dom kulture*, he stands lost in a moment of macabre reverie. It is where his brother was massacred and you can still see the bullet holes splattered across the stage. But he does not stop, always giving more, far past the visible signs of burnout. It is overwhelming to observe.

"This will destroy you," he says.

He escaped through the foothills. Dashing even when the bullets whistled by his head. Sprinting even when the skin on his feet rubbed off. Crawling even when he had not slept for days. Running even when his body was shutting down for lack of food and water. Continuing on even when he had no idea if his father and brother were still alive.

Hasanović showed me rare footage of him emerging from the woods. He looks as though he is sleepwalking, unaware of where he is, dimly following in the footsteps of the other sleepless souls. He is miraculously alive even though a part of him is dead. Later on, what he already knows will be confirmed: thousands of other men who tried to escape just as he did were murdered. Some will be fated to remain missing forever.

There is a particular gaunt expression etched into the faces of so many of the survivors I have met over the years. Those deep set eyes, those sunken cheekbones, and that intense stare that looks right through you. Even if they have since gained weight and their bodies are now puffy, you can still see the wrenching physicality of the horror they live with. It never goes away even amidst happier times.

So why did Hasanović return to a place where he was so violently expelled? Why does he work at the Memorial where his primary responsibility is to teach others while reliving this nightmare? Emotionally, I certainly understand his burden. But to go back to the scene of the crime? Where does that register on the continuum between sheer madness and ferocious courage? It is called hope, defined in the *Oxford Living Dictionary* as “1: A feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen. 1.1: A person or thing that may help or save someone. 1.2: Grounds for believing that something good may happen.”<sup>638</sup>

Hasanović makes me think about another genocide survivor I have had the extraordinary experience of meeting twice in my lifetime: Chum Mey, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide. He was one of the very few people to emerge alive from S-21, the notorious torture facility run by the Khmer Rouge (since converted in the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide). Now a vocal activist, most days you can find Chum Mey in the courtyard speaking with visitors. I asked him once why he continues to return to Tuol Sleng after all the depravities he endured. He wants to educate future generations about what happened first-hand, he told me, instead of their learning about it from a distance.

Spend any significant amount of time with Hasanović and you will meet other brave souls who returned despite all the damage incurred to their psyches and bodies. They embody endurance and tenacity, testaments to both the haphazard nature of luck and steadying influence of faith. Back in the summer of 2015, Hasan introduced me to Ramiz Nukić, a genocide survivor who lives in a small village, along with his wife and three grandchildren. His property in Buljim borders the forested hill near Kamenica where

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<sup>638</sup> Oxford Living Dictionaries. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hope>. Accessed June 29, 2018.

some of Srebrenica's fleeing men were ambushed. Nukić frequently comes across the victims' bones and other objects that have not yet been exhumed, gently protecting them until the authorities arrived. The bits of mortal remains he finds were once human beings. They are forever his fellow countrymen, strangers though they may have been. Due to his work, for which he receives no compensation, approximately two hundred people have been identified. He says he does this work out of love—for those still missing, for those waiting to be found, and, above all, for his beloved Bosnia.<sup>639</sup>

How on earth can hope thrive here?

### **Unfinished Justice, Psychic Limbo**

The traumas that Srebrenica's survivors wrestle with remain acute. Hajra and countless others may never find their kin. She looks much frailer than when I first met her 2011. Many people I know in Bosnia appear that way: tired, resigned, and frustrated, yet they still push forward with steely determination and resilience. Still, one need only take a good look around at the surrounding homes in Srebrenica to see the architectural scars of a much grimmer reality expressed several kilometers away in Potočari. Intense attention to the town is punctuated by the intensity of a couple of weeks in July, only to be left alone until the next year. Still, many interviewees stressed that Srebrenica is not a dead town after the commemoration ends.

It is highly debatable whether any large-scale closure or healing has taken place in Srebrenica, much less across Bosnia. This is despite the underlying aims of transitional justice processes outlined in the DPA as well as those undertaken by the Bosnian federal

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<sup>639</sup> See Erjavec 2016.

government, the ICTY, the UN's constellation of agencies, the ICTJ, and the United States Institute of Peace, amongst other international actors.<sup>640</sup>

There have been successes, of course. For Srebrenica, in particular, the trials focused on convicting the genocide's criminal masterminds and lower-level accomplices. At the same time, the ICMP and MPI facilitated the restorations of the victims' identities through the process of finding and identifying their bodies. Things, however, feel stagnant on the ground and where there is movement it appears to be heading in the wrong direction. Securing a job, putting food on the table, and earning a living put tremendous weight on a populace still struggling to deal with the war's pernicious legacies. This is related to the physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion that the majority of my interlocutors expressed. Life is still filled with a variety of increasingly intractable challenges that is triggering an exodus of the country's young people, resulting in Bosnia's having one of the highest youth unemployment rates in Europe.<sup>641</sup>

Nearly every aspect of life is affected by corruption and well-placed connections (*štela*) are needed to secure a job and even receive prompt medical attention. On top of this, there are ongoing battles to reform the country's primary and secondary educational systems; prevent the privatization of essential public institutions, such as hospitals; and maintain continuous access to basic services, including water and gas.<sup>642</sup> In short, there is an ongoing erosion of social, economic, political, and civil rights.<sup>643</sup> Meanwhile, politicians conspire to stay in power by playing up the familiar tunes of ethno-nationalism perfectly timed with the election season.

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<sup>640</sup> See Popović 2009 and Porobić-Isaković 2016.

<sup>641</sup> BTI 2016 and World Bank 2017.

<sup>642</sup> Jasarević 2017 and Papić 2015.

<sup>643</sup> Freedom House 2016 and HRW 2017.

Taken together, these numerous issues have created an atmosphere of intense frustration and resignation across large swathes of the society. Things have not changed for the better and people are turning inward focused on their own survival, as nearly all my interlocutors mentioned. This is a marked change from the low-level optimism that existed up until about 2006-2008 when the international community began pulling back, according to many people with whom I spoke. While these problems were present then, there was still a feeling, or at least the possibility, that things would get better.

At the macro level, it is simply intolerable to talk about the broader tragedy of what happened to civilians in Bosnia during the war and regardless of their ethnicity, especially outside of Sarajevo. The long-standing atmosphere of denial has further encouraged a climate where the ethnic groups in the public forum are no longer listening to each other, a consistent theme across my Sarajevo-based interviews. This rivalry also sometimes replicates itself within the same ethnic group and even amongst survivors from the same place. Srebrenica is no different.

The inability to mutually recognize and acknowledge each other's suffering, irrespective of ethnic group, gender, or atrocity location, is a frustration shared by many people who work on issues related to all atrocities committed in the last war. They spoke about the rampant culture of competitive victimization that encourages people to align their own personal suffering with their ethnic group's grievances as a way to be powerfully seen and heard. Šmidling voiced her concern that too many people are ready to defend these narratives, stories, and myths with their lives—a version of the “we are

ready” sentiment I have heard expressed in a variety of venues and informal conversations.<sup>644</sup>

Marija Ristić, the then Regional Network Director for Balkan Insight, explained that communities remain caught in the mindset of war and conflict with their neighbors, always looking at what was done to them by the other community.<sup>645</sup> Adnan said it was not just about three sides, but also a personal war “when it’s your family that is dead.”<sup>646</sup> As a representative of the ICTY bluntly put it, “The groups are no longer listening but instead are screaming at each other.”<sup>647</sup> An assemblage of ethnic-specific victims’ associations position themselves defensively, competing for the “prize” of having suffered the most—what Marijana Toma, HLC’s Former Executive Director, calls the “Olympics of victimhood.”<sup>648</sup> Džidić pointed out that politicians go out of their way to be seen as their protectors.<sup>649</sup> Still, Kulasić said that “these organizations are the only ones that get anything done.”<sup>650</sup>

All of the people I spoke to had at least heard about transitional justice, perhaps because it has been repeated *ad nauseum* over the past two decades. There was a discrepancy, though, in what people understood it to mean. Representatives from civil society and victims’ associations, lawyers, international organization representatives, experts, and activists spoke about transitional justice’s general premise with ease even if they held a negative view of it. According to Karup-Druško, there is confusion between

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<sup>644</sup> Personal interview, Tamara Šmidling, Peace Academy Foundation, August 10, 2016.

<sup>645</sup> Skype interview, Marija Ristić, Balkan Insight, August 1, 2016.

<sup>646</sup> Personal interview, “Adnan,” age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

<sup>647</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, ICTY, August 4, 2016.

<sup>648</sup> Personal interview, Marijana Toma, HLC, November 29, 2016.

<sup>649</sup> Personal interview, Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016.

<sup>650</sup> Personal interview, Elmina Kulasić, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

what transitional justice means versus other externally-imposed and overlapping initiatives, including peace and security, dealing with the past (DWP), facing the past (FTP), and reconciliation. These are often seen as separate processes with justice coming solely from the courts.<sup>651</sup> She told me that if Bosnia is seen as a lab for transitional justice, then it has failed since, on one side, people do not know anything about it, yet on the other side, there are no mechanisms in place to constructively deal with these issues. Judith Brand from ForumZFD also clarified that transitional justice is different than both DWP and FTP because the former (transitional justice) is victim-centered while the latter emphasize peacebuilding through educational programs.<sup>652</sup>

Moreover, according to Tokača, the way that perpetrators and victims face the past are separate processes and finding a meeting point between the two is very complex.<sup>653</sup> Reconstruction of social relations, he noted, is not the same thing as reconciliation. How can you even achieve reconciliation when genocide has been committed? It is not a simple accident but rather a deep crime committed against the global community. He also pointed out that the repair of the rule of law in a post-conflict country cannot be solved solely with reconciliation processes.<sup>654</sup>

Tokača went on to explain the problem of outside transitional justice experts from Western democracies guiding the process yet who completely overlook the region's communist histories. These, now post-communist, countries, he said, are not ready to deal with their pasts in a way that is in consonance with liberal traditions. He also

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<sup>651</sup> Personal interview, Dženana Karup-Druško, Association for Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Remembrance, August 11, 2016.

<sup>652</sup> Personal interview, Judith Brand, ForumZFD-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>653</sup> Personal interview, Mirsad Tokača, RDC, August 9, 2016.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid.



underscored the ongoing issue that outsiders working in Bosnia continually fail to recognize that collectivism was exchanged for nationalism across the Western Balkans.<sup>655</sup>

These views contrast with the perspectives of individual citizens who focus on whether justice has been delivered. For the survivors of the genocide I spoke with, there was anger and anguish that the remains of their loved ones may never be discovered, much less identified and that there still are unpunished participants and collaborators who have not been indicted. Justice is a great word, Adnan told me, but is it possible? He thinks not.<sup>656</sup> Hariz said that if both individuals and communities grew to recognize what happened and the awful things that affected everyone, then they would not need transitional justice.<sup>657</sup> Emin said that although the ICTY was established with the goal of pursuing justice, what does it mean when Karadžić only gets a forty year sentence?<sup>658</sup> Kokeza acknowledged if one population says something is justice, the other population claims it is an injustice.<sup>659</sup> Hasan framed it more starkly: what is the point of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on an international court when Bosnian Serbs turn around and say that it is anti-Serb? Binding rules, he went on, should not be debatable.<sup>660</sup>

Orlović used even simpler terms: transitional justice as a concept exists in the minds of practitioners but for average people, all it means are the trials.<sup>661</sup> She said that victims' associations are exposed enough to transitional justice enough that they have created fancy memorials across the region but with no understanding of what they really mean.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>655</sup> Personal interview, Mirsad Tokača, RDC, August 9, 2016.

<sup>656</sup> Personal interview, "Adnan," age 24, Srebrenica *opština*, August 25, 2016.

<sup>657</sup> Personal interview, "Hariz," age 47, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>658</sup> Personal interview, "Emin," age 36, Srebrenica *opština*, August 23, 2016.

<sup>659</sup> Personal interview, Marinko Sekulić Kokeza, RTV Srebrenica, August 26, 2016.

<sup>660</sup> Personal interview, Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, September 8, 2016.

<sup>661</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, 24 January 2017.

<sup>662</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, 24 January 2017.

Regardless, what is justice, according to Miličević, when you look at the terrible post-war situation of women? She grimly reminded me that rapes were still taking place during refugee return programs.<sup>663</sup> The biggest injustice of all though, according to Munira, is to have continue waiting which they have been doing for twenty-one years. Some get it while it is denied to others.<sup>664</sup> Much of the discourse about justice has also now become interchangeable with human rights whereas in years past it was all about the truth, according to Tahirović.<sup>665</sup>

Kulaglić highlighted another distinction: the problem with transitional justice, he said, is that the victims opted more for judicial processes and court resolutions of problems even though these same courts cannot resolve issues related to FTP.<sup>666</sup> For victims to tell their stories within the court system they need to answer specific questions in legal language and are therefore unable to fully express what happened to them. The courts, he noted, also do not focus on reparations to address the victims' needs.<sup>667</sup> Instead, the entire process became locked within the procedural justice frame—the same one that enabled war criminals to stay and/or return to power.<sup>668</sup> Hasan took a much broader view: if intent has to be established in order to prove genocide took place, when does that intent expire? On the day when the last person is executed? When the trains and machines switch off?

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<sup>663</sup> Personal interview, Jadranka Miličević, Fondacija CURE, August 12, 2016.

<sup>664</sup> Personal interview, Munira Subašić, Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa, August 15, 2016.

<sup>665</sup> Personal interview, Murat Tahirović, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

<sup>666</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

<sup>667</sup> Ibid.

<sup>668</sup> Comments by Tobias Flessenkemper, Senior Associate Researcher at the European Institute des CIFE during the Harriman Institute's "Roundtable Discussion: Balkans, EU, and the US," Columbia University, January 27, 2017.

When the digging of mass graves is finished? Why, he asked, is this important? Because it is taken for granted that genocidal intent was over when the DPA was signed.

### **Memorializing Tragedy, Enshrining Controversy**

In the genocide's immediate aftermath, the Memorial's location took center stage as a constructive reconciliation and symbolic social repair mechanism with the Mothers leading the charge. They learned early on to marshal their voices to claim a seat at the table to demand justice internationally as well as locally. The Memorial's establishment provided the impetus to return to Srebrenica knowing that the international community's weight, already laden with guilt, was finally behind them. Back in the early post-war years, the OHR wielded a heavy hand across Bosnia, from the adoption of a single national currency and free passage across entity lines to removing uncooperative powerbrokers from office and passing a host of reforms. In Srebrenica, the OHR was also instrumental in the Memorial's designation as a state institution as well as in securing the Battery Factory.

Much of the focus of how the Memorial came into existence is rooted in two interconnected phenomena. The first was practical: the international community's urgent need to bury the exhumed bodies that were piling up in the salt mines under the city of Tuzla. The second was political: the families' demands that the bodies be buried close to their homes in Srebrenica, which, in turn, facilitated internationally-funded refugee return and resettlement programs. The site reflects a series of contradictions which, I argue, stem, in part, from its having been established initially for reparative purposes through the intimidation of resentful Bosnian Serb authorities into reluctant acceptance.

The normative philosophy underlying the transitional justice project in the country was predicated upon the international community's paternalistic desire to help ravaged Bosnia piece itself back together. Nearly two decades later, the country has not morphed into the stable and largely imagined democratic polity its outside architects envisioned. As international attention continues to wane, this has led to unintended consequences at and for the Memorial. The oversight vacuum has empowered a group of high-profile survivors, alternately backed and/or controlled by Bosniak politicians and the Islamic Community, to prioritize their voices and priorities while curtailing others. Nor is the site immune from the dysfunctional institutional and financial practices that typify contemporary Bosnian politics.

At the local level, the site is a constant cue to local Bosnian Serbs of either the atrocity committed in their name or a crime that they themselves participated in.<sup>669</sup> The sheer scale of the site—both the cavernous warehouses of the Battery Factory and the rolling hills covered in tombstones—dominates the landscape to the near exclusion of everything else nearby. There is also the spatial significance of a highway persistently dividing the Memorial's two parts. The site is an internationally-imposed memorialization mechanism steeped in geographic symbolism based upon the carnage wrought by the perpetrating ethnic group who now control the territory. It is unrealistic for site's survivor stakeholders to bear the responsibility of having to reach out to the Bosnian Serb community. As numerous survivors told me, they have nothing to reconcile: genocide happened to them. This puts the Memorial in a precarious place. It

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<sup>669</sup> Duijzings 2007, 160-161 and Simić 2009, 298.

acts as a lightning rod: the ultimate embodiment of reclamation and remembrance for survivors as well as of repudiation and revulsion by perpetrators.

The single greatest threat to the site's existence remains the RS' possible secession from Bosnia. The paradox is that as international commemoration of the genocide continues to spread, the site's long-term stability feels less secure. However, when we push beyond the site's symbolic origins and two main sets of actors (e.g., survivors and the international community), we can start to locate other equally problematic practices occurring in the exact place where the dead are supposed to find rest. A closer look inside the cemetery brings up issues related to temporality and spatiality as well as the myriad memories conveyed there given that it is the dead who are its singular focus.

The graveyard's design emphasizes different kinds of visual remembrance to create an atmosphere that underscores the gravity of the crime. The semi-circle of stone panels near the entrance meticulously list the names of the victims buried there, restoring each one's identity instead of being lumped together in an abstract number. Large stones emphasizing the familiar number of 8,372 victims and the *opštine* from where they hailed underscore this crime's imprint upon families from across the Podrinje.

It is amongst the thousands of identical white tombstones that reveal a more complicated message: everyone is classified as a *šehidi*. While this religious tradition has been enacted in Islamic cemeteries across the country, the practice has specific implications for how the genocide's victims are identified en masse. Their being branded as religious martyrs is over-coupled with the fact that many of them may have been soldiers. This is a point regularly exploited by genocide deniers who claim that these deaths were the product of a terrible battle between the ABiH and VRS. Moreover, the

Memorial does not openly address why there are a number of people buried in the cemetery who died before July 1995 as well as why certain families decided to inter their kin elsewhere. Here again, many members of the Bosnian Serb community cry foul despite their being legitimate reasons. Unfortunately, this is one way its stakeholders use the Memorial to *reduce* rather than *produce* knowledge about the genocide.

Irrespective of the Memorial's mandate of neutrality, the cemetery is designed in accordance with the Islamic faith while relying on the visual tropes from war cemeteries. This, unfortunately, invokes the conflict's political and ethno-national fault lines. Linking the cemetery's establishment with post-conflict justice has not necessarily panned out as human rights violations against Bošniaks in the RS continue. From its inception, this gap has allowed the community's politicians and the site's stakeholders to weave religiosity and victimhood throughout the commemoration that extend far beyond the site's original reparative purpose. What the Memorial can never do is deliver the kind of criminal, political, and institutional redress that survivors demanded. This includes convicting all war criminals, locating their missing family members, and securing a special status for Srebrenica outside of the RS. It is, after all, a memorial tasked with keeping alive the memory of July 1995, troubled as though that may be.

However, as a transitional justice mechanism, what does the cemetery offer to local Bosnian Serb residents except blame and condemnation? Seen from their perspective, why would they ever set foot in a religious cemetery that calls out for revenge to become justice? It is through this statement, written in three languages and appearing in two prominent places inside the cemetery, that I argue the site's stakeholders have weaponized the genocide's memory using the bodies of the dead as justification. To

critically think, or possibly reimagine, the commemoration without burials forces us to look at some of the more disturbing things taking place. In the early years, publicly burying the dead was as intensely symbolic for Srebrenica's survivors as it was polarizing for local Bosnian Serbs. Back then it made sense because the wounds were fresh, thousands remained missing, and Mladić and Karadžić were still on the run.

Years later, this somber enactment has mutated into something different. It is hard to wonder where, if at all, the mourners' actual experience has been taken into account. Instead the organizers appear to have reinforced the commemoration's political platform as a way of reinforcing Srebrenica's collective identity, one steeped in the semantics of victimization, the language of external intervention, and the platform of ethno-nationalism. If back then the Memorial was a localized mechanism of transitional justice—what is it now?

The act of using the site's centerpiece, the cemetery, as the stage to promote nationalist messages designed to incite ethnic antagonism arguably gives off the impression that the burials are used to invoke shock and sympathy. The micro-level emotional moments taking place, including respect for the dead as both human beings and skeletal remains, are seemingly out of place at an event that is, in theory, *about them*. Instead we have an annual televised spectacle that is taking place *on them*—transporting them back in time using their hearts, bodies, bone fragments, and coffins as the conduit. Lost in the wake are the needs of individual survivors whose suffering is publicly exploited in a crowd of tens of thousands.

In her analysis of how ancient tombs impact Bosnian history, memory, and landscapes, Buturović wonders whether the “dead have agency” rather than being



“simple mirrors through which individuals and societies observe, shape, and authenticate themselves.”<sup>670</sup> I argue that profane aspects of Srebrenica’s commemorative cycle stretch well beyond the Memorial’s efficacy as a reparative mechanism. The event removes whatever traces of agency the dead should be afforded in their final moments above ground through the commemoration’s political overtures. We also move into a different discourse about sacred versus profane burial practices. Although these discussions may dovetail with the role of memorials in war commemoration, they have less to do with the transitional justice paradigm’s focus on “repair, reparation, recovery, and rehabilitation.”<sup>671</sup> Rather, the practices during the commemoration obscure these aims, adding more fuel to the battles over the genocide’s memorialization which are on display throughout the exhibitions.

What you learn about the genocide depends entirely upon which of the three exhibitions you visit. The intense emphasis placed upon the commemoration not only keeps alive the battle over the “truth,” but also impacts much of what is (and is not) taking place inside. Much of the decision-making about the exhibitions rests with the Memorial’s Advisory Working Group led by a tightly knit and highly influential band of survivors. They retain the authority over how the genocide’s memory is presented.

The antagonistic local context the Memorial exists within cannot be underscored enough, although it also serves to shield some of the site’s more problematic communications. What is on display in two of the exhibitions is the same hegemonic narrative. The dichotomous characterizations of innocent Bošniak victims and murderous

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<sup>670</sup> Buturović 2015, 63.

<sup>671</sup> I attribute the use of these concepts (including my mimicking words beginning with the prefix “re”) based directly upon Wagner’s argument about how Bosnia’s transitional justice program has focused on the country’s tacit return to an imagined, and largely peaceful, prewar era (2010b, 25).

Bosnian Serb perpetrators throughout the installations inhibit discussion about other relevant, complex, contradictory, and/or messy facts. This creates an additional challenge when another powerful mnemonic stakeholder, in this case, the Dutch, attempts to expand the narrative. The tragedy of Srebrenica affected tens of thousands of Bošniaks who experienced similar as well as different horrors from 1992 onwards. As a community, they are sadly united though the horrific trauma they survived. The story of what happened belongs to each and every one of them. Yet, only a handful of stories are told: the survivors who fought for and now oversee the site who, in turn, enforce a series of silences about what is discussed there.

There is another cleavage in how Srebrenica's memory is represented. Somehow having to dissect the horror, misery, deaths, and mayhem into before and after July 1995 places the site in a challenging bind. The site does not necessarily reflect the total experience of Srebrenica's survivors of which the genocide was the pinnacle of a much longer planned campaign of extermination beginning in 1992. Within international memory, though, it is July 1995 that commands attention over equally gruesome human rights violations that typified many of the atrocities sustained by other communities. We cannot expect survivors to deviate from their narrative of events, even when they choose to downplay certain facts as well as minimize the Bosnian Serb civilians who were killed. Despite public rhetoric about acknowledging the suffering of all mothers who lost their sons, this is not done in practice. Who can blame them, though, especially since many victims will never be found?

When these four issues are viewed together (e.g., navigating competitive narratives; emphasizing stark binaries; highlighting certain voices; and restricting historical and

contextual timelines), an atrocity site memorial's ability to serve as a location of social repair is more tenuous than as a purely educational site. Creating empathy with the victims while teaching visitors about what happened (no matter how flawed the information may be) is a fundamentally different process than trying to heal wounds between divided peoples in the aftermath of violent conflict.

While the property does contain three exhibition spaces, vast parts of the Battery Factory are in terrible physical condition. Although large amounts of monies are spent on the commemoration, the site, in general, is underfunded and underutilized with the cemetery remaining its natural focal point. Several of my informants were clearly disappointed, angry, and/or frustrated about how the site, especially the Battery Factory complex, is treated like a backwater throughout the year.

The site ironically embodies a new kind of battle which plays out across its exhibitions. It was founded upon aspirations to provide truth, remembrance, and repair that are based upon idealized notions of what healing and closure in post-conflict countries should look like. And yet the disordered representation of the atrocity on the Memorial's walls do not reflect the way collective memories of the tragedy have been interpreted and expressed by the people whose lives it upended. This, in turn, creates another nuanced layer at the site about what they want to remember versus forget.

Whereas the cemetery invites you to contemplate the scale of the crime through its visual and symbolic power, the Battery Factory is arguably a metaphor for the controversies, questions, and silences about the genocide's memory. Herein lies yet another paradox about the conversion of sites of atrocities into memorials which are simultaneously envisioned as symbolic reparations. On the one hand, discussions about

the handling of forensic evidence reveal the challenges in determining what memories should be preserved, erased, and/or allowed to decay. There are also questions about the political and social hierarchies about what should be remembered and/or acknowledged versus forgotten and/or silenced. These issues are even more fraught when one of the groups complicit in the crime is also responsible for financing an exhibition which may also impact how and why certain content is highlighted and/or downplayed.

On the other hand, viewing these same mnemonic issues through the lens of transitional justice underscores how they get lost in meta-level discussions about education, social repair and reconciliation. We can interrogate the exhibitions' narratives and talk about these sites' opportunities to become locations for challenging conversations. We can also analyze their tangible significance to aggrieved communities whose voices were violently silenced. Again, though, the gulf between the intricacies of memorialization and broad aims of transitional justice appear disconnected in practice.

How different memories embedded within the property and featured in the exhibitions are treated is reflective of this gap. While the international community's attention keeps its eye on the commemoration, what is happening at the Battery Factory, in particular, is sidelined either by accident or disinterest. The alteration and decay of Dutchbat's graffiti as well as the abandonment of the property's mass grave both speak to the complexities in managing politically-charged memories that are alternately damning or compromising.

The silences around women's specific experiences within the Memorial reflects how societal norms and taboos also play a role in governing how the genocide's narrative is articulated. The inclusion of Ferida's photo forces us to have this conversation. For if we

do not, are we then not violating her integrity a second time? It reminds us that the stories of the women—as individuals, as human beings, as agents of agency, and, yes, even as emotional beings—deserve to be fully represented well beyond their ethnic, familial, and maternal connections to the men they lost.

When we think of this site as a transitional justice mechanism, it very much worked in this fashion when it was originally founded. It gave the families back some sort of control, voice, and agency during a transition from wartime madness into post-war stability, fragile and flawed though the peace might be. As an iteration of transitional justice, the site reflects the underlying normative assumptions that these international interventions carry, their baggage filled with possibly unrealistic notions about democracy, progress, purity, universalism, paternalism, and order. The needs, demands, and competencies of local constituents are not always in harmony with the paradigm's prescriptive philosophies, strict timelines, finite budgets, and limited attention of international actors.

The Memorial was founded, in part, to preserve the genocide's memory and help the community heal. Yet, it also holds them trapped to certain degree because justice for many survivors has not nor may ever be realized. Issues related to where it is situated, the battles over its memory, the narrative it emphasizes, and the parts of the story it leaves out go well beyond the narrow confines of its original reparative intentions. The property's issues also cannot be disconnected from the political, contemporary, economic, and socio-cultural hurdles facing Bosnia. Nor can the site's utility be analyzed purely as a static historical marker of the past as it remains on the frontlines of the ongoing memory wars. It is also possible to see how the selective promotion of historical

facts and traumatic memories collude in creating a highly mediated physical environment in which the genocide's legacy is remembered, commemorated, and transmitted.

### **Tolerating the Grey**

When these topics are viewed in the aggregate, a new problem surfaces: the inability to critically think about what is taking place at the Memorial. There are issues worth probing if the site is to have the kind of constructive albeit highly painful long-term educational impact it claims as part of its mandate. And herein lies the fault line. Throughout the course of this study, it became apparent that questioning certain parts about the Memorial's message was frowned upon by many of its core stakeholders, a point reiterated by many civil society activists and survivors I interviewed.

Even the purpose of this research was sometimes met with a sigh, indicative of the fact that much of the conversation has moved on. To be fair, though, the pushback against critically thinking about how the genocide's narrative is expressed at the site is symptomatic of a group marred by ethnic violence that has rallied around its collective victimhood from the start. The challenge is engaging with a community that is unable and/or unwilling to tolerate the grey space. As many survivors and activists shared, how can they objectively interrogate what is taking place at the site, the good as well as the troublesome, if every single question is met with accusations of disloyalty and hostility?<sup>672</sup> A few interviewees mentioned their frustrations with how the site's stakeholders, specifically the Mothers, insist on trusting their recounting of events. Mašić

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<sup>672</sup> Personal interviews: Tamara Šmidling, Peace Academy Foundation, August 10, 2016; Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016; and Nicolas Moll, memorialization expert, August 3, 2016.

explained that if you agree, then you are “one of them.” If not, you are rejected from the community.<sup>673</sup>

For example, in January 2018, Suljagić denounced comments by Munira.<sup>674</sup> When asked about the massacre of Bošniaks by the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) in Ahmići, Munira said she only knew about the details of what happened in Srebrenica and could not offer any further comment—effectively dismissing that community’s dead.<sup>675</sup>

Suljagić claimed that Munira’s statement did not reflect the vast majority of Srebrenica’s survivors who stood in solidarity with their Bošniak brothers and sisters slain elsewhere. Citing court documents from the ICTY, Suljagić highlighted how the resources devoted to as well as the planning of the genocide occurred across Bosnia, including areas close to Ahmići in central Bosnia’s Lašva Valley. The implication is that Munira, arguably the most famous and powerful “Mother,” wields the genocide’s memory to ensure that Srebrenica remains the ultimate Bosnian symbol of horror.<sup>676</sup>

What does this public spat between two of Srebrenica’s survivors have to do with the Memorial? Both Suljagić and Munira were involved in the Spomen Soba’s creation. The former was in charge of identifying, researching, and writing the biographic installations

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<sup>673</sup> Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

<sup>674</sup> Suljagić led the “*Glasaču za Srebrenicu*” (“I’ll Vote for Srebrenica”) campaign in advance of Srebrenica’s 2012 municipal elections.

<sup>675</sup> During the separate 1993 civil war between the HVO and the ABiH (which took place during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War), the former committed crimes against humanity while waging ethnic cleansing campaigns against the latter in central Bosnia’s Lašva Valley. An entire set of cases were brought to trial by the ICTY for these crimes. The most infamous massacre was in the village of Ahmići where between 117 and 120 Bošniaks were shot to death, along with a small number who were burnt alive by the HVO. See ICTY. “Crimes Before the ICTY: Central Bosnia.” Subašić’s comments were made during a visit with Croatia’s president where she showed support for that administration, one currently engaged in historical revisionism/denial about these same crimes. On Subašić’s statement, see *Vijesti.ba* 2018a. On Suljagić’s reply, see *Vijesti.ba* 2018b.

<sup>676</sup> A point that came out of a discussion with Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

about some of the victims. The latter made the final determination about which stories would be selected, including that of her husband who, according to Suljagić, was not part of the original list.<sup>677</sup> This is an example of the grey area: how Srebrenica's memory is wielded for public consumption, community control, and, arguably, political influence. The issue of how it is manipulated is well known inside Bosnia.

However, interrogating the way the narrative is reproduced at the site riles its stakeholders. Asking hard questions, according to Suljagić, shows that the genocide is not just a provincial "one-off" massacre but part of a broader genocidal campaign. His point was that "we" (survivors and Bosnian citizens) have the right to ask questions and that "they" (the self-proclaimed gatekeepers of the genocide's memory) are ruining the site by proclaiming that all legitimate questions are treasonous.<sup>678</sup>

What happens when it is the same small group of people who answer all questions (by self-selection as well as by the dearth of others who refuse to speak), repeat the traditional narrative (steeped in pre-war peaceful coexistence and wartime ethnic hatred), and construct the memory that, in turn, gets reproduced by internationals? One of my contacts at OHR painted a specific picture: some things defined as critical moments, but which were actually invented, become accepted because they are repeated. "You see forces," he said, "that transform these huge events into a narrative, almost an oral law."<sup>679</sup>

Because it is not all black and white, according to Holliday, this attitude precludes any discussion about or the ability to see the nuances. The foundational narrative, in turn, underpins nationalism, becoming a sacred cow that cannot be touched.<sup>680</sup> Moreover, the

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<sup>677</sup> Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Personal interview, name withheld, OHR Representative #1, September 1, 2016.

<sup>680</sup> Personal interview, Matthew Holliday, ICMP, September 15, 2016.



intense overemphasis on the dead's collective innocence as religious martyrs operates on two levels. It denies of them of their individual agency while they were alive, but also enables the site's stakeholders to skirt around a more comprehensive narrative of what transpired in enclave in the years prior. Thinking critically about the way these controversies remain alive in a place where the dead are supposedly at rest sheds a light on the limbo that many of Srebrenica's survivors still find themselves in.

Enter into this heady mix a generation of young people who have no clear or direct memories of the war. The majority of what they learn about the past comes predominantly from ethnically-segregated curricula and/or classrooms ("two schools under one roof") as well as from their communities and families.<sup>681</sup> Many of the stories they hear about are well-known horrors which have been committed to memory with little to no encouragement about critically contemplating what took place. They are learning to hate each other, according to Mašić.<sup>682</sup> Cosović-Medić worries since this is all they know: what do you say to them and how do you convey it?<sup>683</sup> Tahirović expressed a similar sentiment—all this public earsplitting makes it difficult to get young people to connect with each other.<sup>684</sup>

Some of the most vibrant discussions with interviewees happened spontaneously when we began talking about the challenges of critically thinking about anything related

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<sup>681</sup> Hadžiristić 2017.

<sup>682</sup> Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016. Another activist colleague (based in Sarajevo) informally explained the frustrations that many people in her generation have with how these narratives are instrumentalized by politicians, victims' groups, and the community. She said even as a feminist she was tired of having to hear about the same stories about specific rape survivors since they have been drummed into her since primary school.

<sup>683</sup> Personal interview, Amela Cosović-Medić, UNDP-Bosnia, August 10, 2016.

<sup>684</sup> Personal interview, Murat Tahirović, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

to Srebrenica (even though most of these took place in Sarajevo and were not specifically with genocide survivors). Still, it was in those spaces where hope for this study was renewed with colleagues encouraging me to push the envelope. Oddly enough, my being able to broach this topic has everything to do with my status as an outsider. I have the benefit of geographic and emotional separation that enables me to evaluate the situation more freely as well as objectively. That is fundamentally different than living with and/or having to interact with the community on a regular basis where no such cognitive distance is afforded.

The Memorial emphasizes horror, sympathy, and innocence while ironically reinforcing the righteousness and politicization of victimhood. Along the way, the ability to think critically is also cast starkly at the negative end of a binary rooted in sincerity and deceit. The genocide moniker, unlike other equally horrific categorizations, such as crimes against humanity, tends to both invite as well as ignite global awareness. The theories about why the Holocaust happened, for example, have shifted in the past seventy odd years due to evolving scholarship and a willingness to engage in hard conversations even as genocide denial and revisionism becomes more venomous.

Micro-historical research sheds new light on the violence waged between ethnic majority populations and Jewish communities in different countries, regions, and communities. New data surfaces about atrocities against both Jews and other targeted groups that was previously unknown. As Holocaust denial continues to thrive, so, too, does the impetus to dig deeper. The passage of time certainly plays a role as new generations of scholars take up the task informed but unencumbered by the past.

The Srebrenica genocide automatically attracts international attention, from activism and scholarship to denial and counter-memorialization, all of which bears down on the Memorial. Embracing the controversies, the dualities, and the grey areas arguably bolsters the atrocity's catastrophe. It fills the narrative out by moving beyond characterizations of good and evil, of morality and wickedness, of pure innocence and abject guilt, of angels and demons, of victims and perpetrators, of civilians and soldiers, and of us and them. It extends the tragedy to all of the Bosnian citizens who were murdered while infusing the memory with even greater power. As Ristić explained, if you put everything into the story, the narrative still speaks for itself and what really happened becomes even clearer.<sup>685</sup> Nor does opening up the narrative mean that the Dutch can entirely abscond themselves from their political and ethical responsibility.

### **Sites of Contestation, Arenas of Opportunity**

What is the emotional and psychic impact of having over eight thousand men and boys slaughtered in the surrounding areas, the vast majority of whom are buried at the Memorial? Certainly, the death and mayhem in the region, and indeed across the entire country, is not limited to a few short weeks during July 1995. It is not a stretch to say that much of Bosnia remains a crime scene, especially with so many of the former atrocity sites reconverted back into municipal buildings, community centers, schools, hotels, restaurants, bars, hospitals, and private homes.

The absence of a Bosnian law on memorialization has led to a culture where nearly all monuments and memorials emphasize that “they did this to us,” according to the

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<sup>685</sup> Skype interview, Marija Ristić, Balkan Insight, August 1, 2016.

CNA's extensive analysis of such sites across the country.<sup>686</sup> Davorka Turk illustrated how this logic is connected to the way the memory of the war is portrayed. "Look what they did to us" offers a convenient cover for "we would never have done that if they hadn't"—meaning "they" are bigger "villains" than "us." "We" only reacted and now "we" finally get our "revenge."<sup>687</sup> This exact kind of thinking is on display in the footage from July 11, 1995 when Mladić famously declared that the Serbs were taking back Srebrenica from the Turks.

In practical terms, there is no framework that guides the design, location, financing, community negotiations, or general procedures for memorials, creating a process that is wholly incidental as both Hasan and Kulaglić explained.<sup>688</sup> The lack of this state-level law means that memorialization is left to local politicians who may or may not allow it, such as is the case in Prijedor, according to both Tahirović and Džidić.<sup>689</sup> At the same time, according to Kulaglić, most communities build whatever they want even if they are not sure about exactly what happened in a particular location (i.e., it may or may not be a site of atrocity) and/or they are often located near religious centers where no crimes occurred in the immediate vicinity.<sup>690</sup> As Suljagić pointed out, if the purpose was to preserve the memory of the victims, then memorialization is not living up to its

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<sup>686</sup> CNA 2016. See also Bosnia and Herzegovina Ministry 2013; Hajdarpašić 2010; Pajić and Popović 2012; Popović 2009; Simpson et al. 2012; Tepić 2012; and Tokača 2010. Another good listing of all war-related monuments is called the *Centralna evidencija spomenika u BiH* (Central Register of Monuments) coordinated by the human rights activist, Edvin Kanka Ćudić, through his organization, the Association for Social Research and Communications (UDIK). See <http://ces-cem.org/central-register-of-monuments/?lang=en>. Accessed February 16, 2018.

<sup>687</sup> Personal interview, Davorka Turk, CNA, August 2, 2016.

<sup>688</sup> Personal interviews: Amir Kulaglić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016 and Hasan Nuhanović, Consultant to the Memorial, September 8, 2016.

<sup>689</sup> Personal interviews: Denis Džidić, Balkan Insight, August 12, 2016 and Murat Tahirović, Association of Victims & Witnesses of Genocide, August 17, 2016.

<sup>690</sup> Personal interview, Amir Kulaglić, Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, August 22, 2016.

expectations. Instead, in the absence of a greater vision about the role of memorials, the countryside has turned into a glorified funeral parlor.<sup>691</sup>

Memorials are a fast, cheap, and convenient way to deal with the past, Orlović told me. You can put on a fancy suit and don a sad face once a year and then ignore the victims the other 364 days.<sup>692</sup> Mašić explained that this one-sided culture of remembrance inhibits others from expressing a more expansive view where people from more than one ethnic group are commemorated.<sup>693</sup> This is partially due to the visceral disagreement about who were the victims and aggressors in the last war, inhibiting any possible joint memorials or commemorations, according to Hikmet Karčić from the Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bośniaks.<sup>694</sup>

Even in Sarajevo, Nicolas Moll, a memory studies expert based in Bosnia, points out that memorialization is still very narrow-minded.<sup>695</sup> For example, in 2014, a plaque honoring Mladić was installed in the Vraca neighborhood of Eastern Sarajevo and will remain in place despite his recent conviction.<sup>696</sup> The plaque outside Vjećnica, the rebuilt national library and town hall building, reads,

*[English]:* On this place Serbian criminals in the night of 25th-26th August, 1992 set on fire [the] National and University's library of Bosnia and Herzegovina, over 2 million of books, periodicals and documents vanished in the flame. Do not forget, remember and warn!<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>691</sup> Personal interview, Emir Suljagić, political activist, August 4, 2016.

<sup>692</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

<sup>693</sup> Personal interview, Alma Mašić, YIHR-Bosnia, August 2, 2016.

<sup>694</sup> Personal interview, Hikmet Karčić, Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bośniaks, August 3, 2016.

<sup>695</sup> Personal interview, Nicholas Moll, memorialization expert, August 3, 2016.

<sup>696</sup> Lakić 2017.

<sup>697</sup> CNA 2016.

We also need to remember that during Tito's era, memorialization was focused on instilling national myths, glorifying communism, and commemorating partisan victories; it was not about civilian victims, according to Tokača.<sup>698</sup>

Nevertheless, I argue that one of the most powerful memorialization tools is the conversion of sites of atrocities into memorials. They protect the past by marking the spot where the crimes took place; commenting on the present by reminding aggrieved communities of the conflict; and ensuring that future generations remain aware of what transpired years, and sometimes decades, before. There is nothing benign about their physical locations, especially for the neighboring communities. And yet it is still possible that they may eventually evolve into places to have these difficult conversations while serving as vivid reminders of how current societal divisions, such as racism, displacement, and xenophobia, require activism and vigilance. Nowhere does this have more vital resonance than in Bosnia.

The Srebrenica genocide was shocking enough that, long before it was legally declared as such, the initial idea for cemetery was already underway. Other international actors also rallied around Srebrenica, taking advantage of their might to force the RS's reluctant acquiescence. Over the years as the commemoration grew in size, both in terms of burials and attendees, so, too, did the Memorial's presence and significance amplify not only in Potočari but throughout the world.

The commemoration serves as an emotional container for the community at home and abroad to reassert their presence on the lands from which they were cleansed. However, the site is also a strategic vessel to attach claims of nationalism to the banner of perpetual

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<sup>698</sup> Personal interview, Mirsad Tokača, RDC, August 9, 2016.

victimhood. Its stakeholders, buoyed by the political and religious establishment, use its bullhorn to comment upon issues that span beyond the atrocity. Srebrenica's memory, in other words, has been weaponized.

It is also worth acknowledging how the site's stakeholders, backed by nationalist politicians and the Islamic Community, want Srebrenica's memory to remain on the international agenda. However, they steadfastly hold the Memorial back, possibly because they refuse, cannot, are not capable of, and/or are too traumatized to open up the discussion to talk about the uncomfortable silences. As several informants told me, the survivors have been given too much history to manage. Where are, for example, the other voices, outside of the Dutch, to offer additional balance and insights?

Srebrenica is part of the sad list that includes Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Rwanda as well as the Holocaust, the Holodomor, and countless others. The site's symbolism has not changed, nor has its importance, and most certainly not its power. In fact, it is more relevant than ever as the world sits by while Syria's children, women, and men, along with the country's cultural legacy, are obliterated. Yet, we have a notorious crime that is memorialized at a site that appears to be managed as an afterthought. As Orlović pointed out, the notion of "post-truth" has existed in the Balkans for quite some time. The staunch Bośniak narrative in this light, she said, is directly related to the steadily deteriorating climate of accountability in Serbia.<sup>699</sup>

At the Memorial, traces of hidden, ignored, or thorny issues, events, experiences, and voices appear once you begin to scratch just below the surface of how the genocide's memory is represented. Perhaps, more individual stories will eventually reappear in a

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<sup>699</sup> Personal interview, Sandra Orlović, HLC, January 24, 2017.

more meaningful way by the next generation of young people and/or in more nuanced national and international scholarship. For now, the installations at the Memorial as well as the physical property dance around them, hint but do not delve deeply into them, or simply discount them altogether. As Nukić told me, people in Srebrenica will become burned out as long as their focus remains on finding answers rather than on creating opportunities for future generations to ask questions and find constructive ways to engage with and possibly solve them.<sup>700</sup>

Untangling the Memorial from the bigger controversies that engulf the genocide's memory continually threatened to overshadow this study's focus. It is necessary, though, because this research is about real life as much as it is about concepts. My express hope is that it will hold a space open to talk about some of the things taking place at the site—issues that are widely understood by many of my interlocutors who are bounded by a toxic national environment where saying this out loud is, at best, inflammatory and, at worst, dangerous.

There is a life force within Srebrenica, and I use those words deliberately, however faint it may be. You can see it in the smiling faces of the town's youngest generation of children. You can feel it sitting in the living room drinking coffee with a friend while observing several little girls celebrating a birthday in bedazzled glee. You can sense it in talking with survivors who returned and now have families of their own. Whether the site can create a safe environment where they might be able to work through these painful issues about the past together, as Bosnian citizens, is unknown.

That is where hope thrives.

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<sup>700</sup> Personal interview, Emir Nukić, civil society activist, August 13, 2016.



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## **Appendices**

## IRB Approvals

**RUTGERS**

Office of Research and Regulatory Affairs  
Arts and Sciences IRB  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
335 George Street / Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

orra.rutgers.edu/artsci  
732-235-9806

March 24, 2016

Laura Beth Cohen  
175 University Ave.  
Room 220A  
Newark NJ 07102

**P.I. Name:** Cohen  
**Protocol #:** 16-569M

Dear Laura Beth Cohen:

<b>X</b>					
<b>Initial</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Continuation</b>	<b>Continuation w/ Amend</b>	<b>Adverse Event</b>	

Protocol Title: "Victim Trap: Transitional Justice, Liminality, and Mnemonic Battles at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Center in Bosnia i Herzegovina"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

<b>Approval Date:</b>	3/20/2016	<b>Expiration Date:</b>	3/19/2017
<b>Expedited Category(s):</b>	6,7	<b>Approved # of Subject(s):</b>	60

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes **MUST** be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

<b>Additional Notes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110</li> <li>▪ HSCP Certification will no longer be accepted after 7/1/15 (including for anyone previously grandfathered). CITI becomes effective on July 1, 2015 for all Rutgers faculty/staff/students engaged in human subjects research.</li> </ul>
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**Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.**

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

*Farah Pepper*

Acting For--  
Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.  
Professor, Department of Food Science  
IRB Chair, Arts and Sciences Institutional Review Board  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

cc: Dr. Alexander Hinton

# RUTGERS

Office of Research and Regulatory Affairs  
Arts and Sciences IRB  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
335 George Street / Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

orra.rutgers.edu/artsci

732-235-9806

September 15, 2016

Laura Beth Cohen  
175 University Ave.  
Room 220A  
Newark NJ 07102

P.I. Name: Cohen  
Protocol #: 16-569M

Dear Laura Beth Cohen:

Initial      Amendment      Continuation      Continuation w/ Amend      Adverse Event

Protocol Title: "Victim Trap: Transitional Justice, Liminality, and Mnemonic Battles at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Center in Bosnia i Herzegovina"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Amendment Approval Date: 9/14/2016  
Expedited Category(s): 6,7

Expiration Date: 3/19/2017  
Approved # of Subject(s): 100

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. This approval is valid **ONLY** for the dates listed above;
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes **MUST** be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes:

- Expedited Amendment Approval per 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2) on 9/14/2016 for Addition of Human Subjects for a New Total of 100

**Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.**

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,



Acting For--  
Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.  
Professor, Department of Food Science  
IRB Chair, Arts and Sciences Institutional Review Board  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

cc: Dr. Alexander Hinton

(MW:wbc)

## Consent Forms (English and Bosnian)

### Attachment 4b Revised: Interview Consent Form

You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about the impact of post-conflict reconstruction programs and memorialization projects in Srebrenica. This study is being conducted by myself, Laura Cohen, an advanced graduate student in the Division of Global Affairs at Rutgers University in the United States.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to take part in one interview concerning your experience with the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial. This interview will take approximately sixty to ninety minutes. There are no known risks associated with your participation beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help me better understand how people perceive the Memorial in the context of their everyday lives.

I will maintain the confidentiality of this interview by keeping your consent form separate from what we discuss. Also your name will not be mentioned on the audio recording. This is to make sure that your name and identity will not be linked with any information you have provided.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer. If for some reason something upsets you, please just tell me you no longer want to continue and we will absolutely stop. You can stop this interview at any time and for any reason and do not have to provide an explanation.

I want to make sure that you understand the intent and purpose of this research so please ask any questions if you need me to clarify anything before you sign this consent form.

*Please check whether Laura Cohen may quote your statements in her dissertation:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give Laura Cohen permission to use my name when quoting material from this interview

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I prefer that my name not be used

*If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, or if you have questions/wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact:*

Laura Cohen (Principal Investigator) — Phone: +1-917-297-5322 / Email: lbc60@scarletmail.rutgers.edu  
Address: Rutgers University, Division of Global Affairs, 175 University Avenue, Conklin Hall Room 220A,  
Newark, New Jersey 07102 USA

Dr. Alexander Hinton (Faculty Adviser) — Phone: +1-973-353-5255 / Email: ahinton@andromeda.rutgers.edu  
Address: Rutgers University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 360 Martin Luther King Boulevard, Hill  
Hall Room 603, Newark, New Jersey 07102

*For questions about your rights as a research participant:*

Institutional Review Board, Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey  
335 George Street, Liberty Plaza / 3rd Floor / Suite 3200, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Phone: +1-732-235-9806 / Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Subject Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*For IRB Use Only. This Section Must be Included on the Consent Form and Cannot Be Altered Except For Updates to the Version Date.*

<b>IRB Stamp Box</b>
<b>APPROVED</b>
MAR 20 2016
Approved by the Rutgers IRB

<b>IRB Stamp Box</b>
<b>EXPIRES</b>
MAR 19 2017
Approved by the Rutgers IRB

Version Date: v1.0

Page 1



**Dodatak 4b revidiran: Obrazac za pristanak na intervju**

Pozvani ste da učestvujete u istraživačkoj studiji čiji je cilj saznati više o učinku postratnih programa obnove i projekata memorijalizacije u Srebrenici. Studiju vodim ja, Laura Cohen, doktorantica na Odsjeku za globalna pitanja pri Univerzitetu Rutgers u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama.

Ako pristanete učestvovati u studiji, od Vas će se tražiti da uradite intervju i govorite o svom doživljaju Memorijalnog centra Srebrenica-Potočari. Intervju će trajati 60 do 90 minuta. Ne postoje nikakvi rizici vezani za Vaše učešće, mimo onih prisutnih u svakodnevnom životu. Iako Vi nećete primiti nikakvu direktnu naknadu, ovo istraživanje će mi pomoći da razumijem kako ljudi doživljavaju memorijalni centar u kontekstu svakodnevnog života.

Povjerljivost ovog intervjua bit će očuvana tako što će se Vaš pismeni pristanak držati odvojeno od onoga o čemu budemo razgovarali. Također, Vaše ime neće biti spomenuto na audio snimku. Na taj način, Vaše ime i identitet neće biti dovedeni u vezu s onim što budete rekli.

Vaše učešće u studiji je dobrovoljno i možete odbiti da učestvujete ili se povući u bilo kojem trenutku bez ikakvih sankcija. Također, ako postoje neka pitanja na koja radije ne biste odgovorili ili Vam je neugodno da na njih odgovorite, molim Vas da to kažete i odmah ćemo zaustaviti intervju ili preći na sljedeće pitanje, kako god Vi želite. Ako Vas nešto bude uzrujalo, molim Vas da mi kažete da ne želite nastaviti i istog trenutka ćemo prekinuti razgovor. Vi također možete prekinuti ovaj intervju kad god želite i iz bilo kojeg razloga, bez da mi ponudite ikakvo objašnjenje.

Važno mi je da razumijete svrhu i cilj ovog istraživanja, stoga Vas molim da mi postavljate pitanja ukoliko želite da Vam nešto pojasnim prije nego potpišete ovu izjavu o pristanku.

***Molimo obilježite da li Laura Cohen može citirati Vaše izjave u svojoj disertaciji:***

\_\_\_\_\_ Da, dajem Lauri Cohen dozvolu da koristi moje ime kada bude citirala materijal iz ovog intervjua.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ne, radije bih da se moje ime ne koristi.

***Ako postoji nešto o studiji ili Vašem učešću što je nejasno ili što ne razumijete, ili ako imate bilo kakvih pitanja/želite prijaviti problem vezan za istraživanje, možete kontaktirati:***

**Laura Cohen** (Glavna istraživačica) — Telefon: +1-917-297-5322 / E-mail: lbc60@scarletmail.rutgers.edu  
Adresa: Univerzitet Rutgers, Odsjek za globalna pitanja, 175 University Avenue, Conklin Hall Room 220A, Newark, New Jersey 07102 SAD

**Dr. Alexander Hinton** (Savjetnik) — Telefon: +1-973-353-5255 / E-mail: ahinton@andromeda.rutgers.edu  
Adresa: Univerzitet Rutgers, Odsjek za sociologiju i antropologiju, 360 Martin Luther King Boulevard, Hill Hall Room 603, Newark, New Jersey 07102

***Za sva pitanja o Vašim pravima kao učesnika/ce kontaktirajte:***

Komisija za etičko istraživanje, Univerzitet Rutgers, Državni univerzitet u New Jerseyu  
335 George Street, Liberty Plaza / 3rd Floor / Suite 3200, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Telefon: +1-732-235-9806 / E-mail: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Ime ispitanika/ce (štampana slova) \_\_\_\_\_

Potpis ispitanika/ce \_\_\_\_\_ Datum \_\_\_\_\_

Potpis glavne istraživačice \_\_\_\_\_ Datum \_\_\_\_\_

**Samo za potrebe Komisije za etičko istraživanje (KEI). Obrazac za pristanak mora imati ovaj odjeljak i on se ne smije mijenjati, osim izmjena u datumu verzije.**

**KEI pečat**

This informed consent form was approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects on 20 March 2016; approval of this form expires on 19 March 2017.

**KEI pečat**

Datum verzije: v1.0  
str. 1

## **Interview Guide (English and Bosnian)**

### **Transitional Justice**

- What is your perspective on transitional justice and memorialization programs in Srebrenica?
  - In your opinion, has transitional justice helped or hurt Bosnia? What about in Srebrenica?
  - What does “justice” mean to you? What does “closure” mean? What does “healing” mean?
- What are the challenges in trying to help bring “closure” and “healing” to Srebrenica?
  - Do you think this could ever happen?
- Are transitional justice programs in Srebrenica keeping people focused on the past more than on the present and the future? If yes, why does the memory of the war still loom large?
- Describe the involvement of the international community in Srebrenica since the war.
- What is your opinion about international programs that were designed to help rebuild Srebrenica? Have any of these programs brought people together?
- What kinds of programs are actually needed in Srebrenica?
- What are the challenges of implementing transitional justice programs in Srebrenica?

### **Contested Memory**

- Why is memorialization so fraught in Bosnia?
- In your opinion, do you think the memory of the past is holding the people of Srebrenica back?
- How does the contested nature of the Srebrenica genocide play out at the Srebrenica Memorial?
- What is the relationship between the annual 11 July commemoration and other commemorations held around the country? Do you think it is helpful or does it overshadow them?
- What is the Srebrenica Memorial’s connection to genocide denial and counter-commemorative events that take place around the same time as the 11 July commemoration?
- Why do you think interpretations of this site are so different?
- What kind of impact does having such a large annual commemoration have on the community?
- In your opinion, does the annual commemoration focus more on burials or on politics and the past?

### **Life in Srebrenica**

- What are the positive and/or challenging aspects of life in and around Srebrenica?
- In the twenty years since the war ended, do you think that life in Srebrenica has improved?
- In your opinion, what is the future of Srebrenica?
- In your opinion, and in a perfect world, what would have to happen to bring everyone together?
- What is your opinion about the way politicians in the country deal with Srebrenica?
- What in particular about political climate in Srebrenica do you believe is important to understand in relation to the Srebrenica Memorial?

### **The Srebrenica Memorial**

- Describe the Srebrenica Memorial’s relationship to the local community now
- What is your interaction with/relationship to the site?
- What are your thoughts about why some people have issues with it?
- Are there other atrocities that took place starting in onward that should also be remembered? Why?
- What is it like here in Srebrenica in the days leading up to the 11 July commemoration? Do you stay at home or do you go elsewhere?
- Why is it important that the Srebrenica Memorial strictly focus on the events of July 1995?
- Would it make a difference to you if the Srebrenica Memorial mentioned other atrocities that happened in the municipality from 1992 onwards?
- Is it possible for the Srebrenica Memorial to include other atrocities in its narrative?
  - Would this dilute its narrative?
  - Would doing this come across as somehow equalizing the scale of the atrocities?
- In your opinion, does the Srebrenica Memorial hold the community back, meaning that it keeps people stuck in the past?
- Do you think that the Memorial is a metaphor for the problems in Bosnia since the war’s end?

### Tranzicijska pravda

- Kako Vi vidite tranzicijsku pravdu i programe memorijalizacije u Srebrenici?
  - Da li mislite da je tranzicijska pravda pomogla ili odmogla Bosni? Šta je sa Srebrenicom?
  - Šta za Vas znači “pravda”? Šta za Vas znači “pronaći mir”? Šta za Vas znači “zacijeljenje”?
- Koji se izazovi moraju savladati da bi se došlo do “zacijeljenja” i “pronašao mir” u Srebrenici?
  - Da li mislite da je to moguće?
- Da li su zbog programa tranzicijske pravde u Srebrenici ljudi više fokusirani na prošlost, umjesto na sadašnjost ili budućnost? Ako je odgovor da, zašto je uspomena na rat još uvijek tako prisutna?
- Opišite djelovanje međunarodne zajednice u Srebrenici od rata do danas.
- Šta mislite o međunarodnim programima napravljenim za ponovnu izgradnju Srebrenice? Da li je ijedan od ovih programa uspio povezati ljude?
- Kakvi su programi zapravo potrebni u Srebrenici?
- Koji su izazovi provođenja programa tranzicijske pravde u Srebrenici?

### Osporeno sjećanje

- Zašto je memorijalizacija u Bosni tako složeno pitanje?
- Da li mislite da sjećanje na prošlost spriječava ljude u Srebrenici da nastave dalje?
- Na koji način je osporavana priroda genocida u Srebrenici iskazana u Memorijalnom centru u Srebrenici?
- U kakvom je odnosu obilježavanje 11. jula sa drugim komemoracijama koje se organizuju širom zemlje? Da li mislite da je ono korisno ili da baca u sjenu sve druge komemoracije?
- Kakva je veza između Memorijalnog centra u Srebrenici sa poricanjem genocida i kontra-komemorativnim događajima koji se dešavaju u isto vrijeme kad i obilježavanje 11. jula?
- Po Vašem mišljenju, zašto ljudi imaju tako različite interpretacije ovog mjesta?
- Kakav učinak na zajednicu ima tako velika, godišnja komemoracija?
- Po Vašem mišljenju, da li se tokom godišnje komemoracije veći fokus stavlja na sahrane ili na politiku, na prošlost ili na budućnost?

### Život u Srebrenici

- Koje su pozitivne i/ili izazovne strane života u i oko Srebrenice?
- Da li mislite da se život u Srebrenici poboljšao u posljednjih dvadeset godina od završetka rata?
- Šta mislite kakva je budućnost Srebrenice?
- Po Vašem mišljenju, u jednom savršenom svijetu, šta bi moglo dovesti ljude do pomirenja?
- Šta mislite o načinu na koji se političari ove zemlje odnose prema Srebrenici?
- Šta je, po Vašem mišljenju, nužno razumijeti o političkoj klimi u Srebrenici kada je riječ o Memorijalnom centru?

### Memorijalni centar u Srebrenici

- Opišite odnos između Memorijalnog centra i lokalne zajednice u Srebrenici
- Kakav je Vaš odnos/interakcija s tim mjestom
- Zašto mislite da neki ljudi imaju problem s tim mjestom?
- Da li su počinjeni drugi zločini nakon 11. jula koji bi trebali biti obilježeni? Zašto?
- Kakvo je stanje u Srebrenici pred 11. juli? Da li ostajete kući ili idete negdje?
- Zašto je bitno da fokus Memorijalnog centra u Srebrenici bude na događajima iz jula 1995?
- Da li bi Vam nešto značilo kada bi Memorijalni centar u Srebrenici bio posvećen i drugim zločinima koji su se dogodili u opštini počevši od 1992?
- Da li bi bilo moguće uključiti i druge zločine u narativ Memorijalnog centra u Srebrenici?
  - Da li bi to razvodnilo narativ?
  - Da li bi to ostavilo dojam da se na neki način svi zločini stavljaju na istu ravan?
- Po Vašem mišljenju, da li Memorijalni centar u Srebrenici sputava zajednicu u smislu da drži ljude okovane u prošlosti?
- Mislite li da je Memorijalni centar u Srebrenici metafora za probleme koje Bosna ima od kraja rata do danas?