

**How (Long) To Mourn
The Pedagogical Implications of Imposed Remembrance
Practices: Two Cases from
Bosnia–Herzegovina**

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Abstract

With the example of two anthropological accounts from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the author explores the discrepancy between the creators of memory politics and remembrance practices, who are often survivors or political bodies, and the post-war youth audience with its own understanding and—occasionally second-hand—experience of recent violent events. The memory created by one generation is through memory practices passed to the post-war generation, but not necessarily in the way that generation wants to be served. If one is to accept the notion that present memory serves future aspirations, the author argues that it indicates the future generations passively accept their acquired memories, with no critical reflection or fresh response, and an accepted version of social history is constructed out of the memories of their predecessors. This perspective marks every new generation as a mere carrier of past agendas, lacking critical appraisal and autonomous action. This approach condemns every new generation to simply fulfil the future aspirations of their parents. Indeed, this happens and social institutions, like schools and media, support this largely. On the contrary, the author claims that by creating a space for alternative voice of youth, we could hear what the new generations *aspire for*.

Key words: remembrance, post-war youth, history education, peace education

In my work in peace education in Bosnia-Herzegovina I have lately noticed a tension between the *memorialization fatigue* on the one side and *persistent silence* on the other: while many survivors fight daily to break the silence that perpetuates impunity and in this way aiming to achieve justice (Tepić 2012), the post-war generations, today's teenagers, would often feel overloaded by the war memories, that overshadows problems of their own zeitgeist, like unemployment, or mass depopulation. In a way, the socially imposed necessity to always remember in the post-conflict society uses the new generations as sort of 'remembrance vehicle', carrying the burden of remembrance for the violent events and atrocities of the past generations. In this paper I explore how some grand memory narratives are accepted by the youth today. I ask if the memory created by the survivors can serve the post-war youth, or should every generation create its own approach to the survivors' memory practices and nonetheless, to create its own memory – in a way that they *want* or *need* to remember.

The questions and discussion in the following paper were inspired by two ethnographic accounts that I documented during my research fieldwork in the summer of 2018. In July of that year, I attended IFS – Emmaus International Youth Working Camp in Srebrenica, Bosnia–Herzegovina, with young people drawn from within the country and further afield, including a group of teenage volunteers of African descent from Paris, France. Camp every year attracts among 60-80 participants of different ages. In addition to concrete physical work, the educational activities focused on the memorial centre in Potočari and preparation of the memorial site for the commemoration that was scheduled to take place on 11 July. As part of the visit, we also watched a short but very graphic film about the massacre in Srebrenica. Since no French translation was available and no discussion followed, the French volunteers soon became bored. They started to chatter and giggle, and one volunteer lay down on a bench and fell asleep. The young Bosnian volunteers were upset by this behaviour and their concentration on the film was disrupted. When the screening ended, the group leader intended to take us to the exhibition next door; however, due to the incident during the screening, the group dynamics were unsettled and some of the young people stayed outside the hall, expressing anger and frustration about the behaviour of the French participants. Much was said about 'proper ways of behaving' and 'showing respect to the locals'. The conversation evolved into arguments involving racist biases and pejorative, discriminatory comments about the black French teenagers.

A week before this incident, I was at the Mostar Summer Youth Programme (MSYP),

¹ teaching a class about the historical continuation of collective (structural) violence and the transmission of hatred through toxic collective memories. The group in Mostar consisted of ten teenage students with mixed ethnoreligious backgrounds. When I submitted my syllabus, the organizers expressed hesitancy regarding the wisdom of raising such loaded historical topics in the region. This hesitancy and extreme caution proved to be justified. One day during the summer school, the Post-Conflict Research Centre (PCRC) of Sarajevo screened a short film representing the events in Mostar during the war, conveyed through the story of a rabbi who resided in the town at the time. Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks who survived the attacks in the town shared their stories and, since these were portrayed as first-hand accounts of personal experiences, the film director did not present a balanced perspective or search for an ultimate ‘historical truth’. The film was very personal and, hence, subjective and one-sided. After the screening, some pupils responded with anger and frustration, calling it ‘propaganda’. Despite the fear of the organizers, I did not experience any similar outbursts during my class. However, I also noticed that while the students were eager to discuss anything related to the massacre in Srebrenica, my references to the war-related events in Mostar were mostly responded to in silence.

By exploring these two events in more depth and including the informal conversations that I engaged in with the participating teenagers, I aim to explore the discrepancy between the creators of memory politics, who are often survivors or political bodies, and the post-war youth audience with its own understanding and—occasionally second-hand—experience of recent events. With the case of *in-situ learning* (the camp in Potočari) and the classroom teaching in Mostar, I consider the ways in which the same memory practices are applied by different generational groups and whether expected understandings of those practices, ie. *appropriate and desired readings* and *appropriate and desired commemorative behaviour* differ between groups or are dictated by those who create them. For survivors, remembrance is often part of the efforts towards achieving recognition, justice and denying the crimes (e.g. Selimovic, 2013; McGrattan & Hopkins, 2016) but during my ethnographic work I noted that this agenda is not necessarily shared by their descendants. Witnessing the war stories from (grand)parents in the families, does not necessarily make youth interested or (emotionally) affected. Through our conversations I could record, that memory is important for them, but it is not central to their own everyday life. As my note from the field diary reads Mostar, 11 July 2019):

It was very hard to get them in discussion about Srebrenica, I was trying to pose different questions and ask in different ways, but their responses were very short, and they felt artificial. Something that I hear from everyone is that they need to remember. At one point, I felt that M. was hesitating with their answer; they say that talking about Srebrenica is important, but also show with the face and body expression that they

feel annoyed and uncomfortable. I waited for them after the class, and they would say that all this is overwhelming, and that it is not that they do not care, but they really have to move on (translated and transcribed by the author).

While this and similar patterns have been repeating throughout the entire course, I have noticed that adhering to what is expected of them without any critical appraisal or reflectiveness is some type of comfortable position. Their answers on the importance of remembrance were almost always aligned with the mainstream narratives, expressing sorrow and mourning with the victims, but also keeping a distance – historically and geographically: in showing as they are not (anymore) part of this story. This led me to ask if young people really need (or want) to remember: and if yes, what would their motivation for remembrance be? How and what do we expect young post-war generations to remember and commemorate? Are they able to understand the importance of commemoration practices beyond personal, emotional attachments of the traumatic experiences of their parents, namely, to learn about the mechanisms of collective violence and more importantly – how to prevent it?

To address these concerns, I use data consisting of diary analysis, participation observation, and informal conversations with 15 young people: all aged 15–19, ten of them attended MSYP in Mostar and 5 of them a camp in Srebrenica. Six of the 15 participants would not state their ethnic origin; one participant explicitly claimed to be raised in a mixed family; one of the participants identified as ‘Yugoslav’ and the remainder identified as Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks or Bosnians. I am not using names or pseudonyms but only providing the quotation of the original transcription. Throughout this text, neutral pronouns and adjectives (they) are used to indicate gender of the research participants.² All the events and individuals in this text are real people and may recognize themselves, although I have attempted to ensure their anonymity. I informed all the participants in advance about the nature of the study and obtained their consent to publish my observations. The conversations were held in both English and local languages. If citation was originally in the local language, I have indicated that the translation is mine.

Remembering Srebrenica in Mostar

I initially responded to the call for volunteer teaching staff at the Mostar Summer Youth Programme (MSYP) with the intention of taking as my subject the continuation of violence in a historical perspective. The main coordinator shared my ideas with other staff at the school. They all expressed hesitancy about the subject and stressed the need for a cautious approach when teaching about the recent violent history of Mostar. The goal of the course was to address repeating patterns of collective violence, to learn about preventive practices and to discuss ways of breaking the cycle of violence and building resilience. We

agreed on certain language policies and curriculum adjustments, beginning by replacing the term *collective violence* with *social oppression*. The latter term can also relate to everyday practices, such as prejudice, sexual harassment and bullying, and is supposedly less provocative in this context than collective violence. This would allow the students to respond to the topics that they felt comfortable with and avoid causing distress to their families. In the ten-hour course, we attempted to address the tendency of historical oppression to ‘normalize’ everyday violent practices and the impact of this normalization on the ways that conflicts and wars are waged. I tried to cover cases from all over the world, including slavery, colonialization, the Holocaust and the recent persecution of the Rohingya people in Myanmar. I used the concepts of intersectionality and multiple identities to elucidate how ideological and propagandist strategies employ social exclusion, incorporate discrimination and sometimes eliminate entire groups. I took great care to design every session in a balanced way, introducing both recent and older historical examples, comparing geographically and culturally diverse cases and so on. I did not want to completely omit the Bosnian case, but I wanted students to understand broader, conceptual paradigms in relation to concrete experiences in their local environment.

Before the class, I asked all of the students for their consent to write about this course in my research and, since they were all underage, I needed to obtain permission from their parents. All but one set of parents gave their signed consent. One of the students came to me with his signed consent form and told me that, although his parents signed the form, ‘they do not want me to talk much about what happened during the war and they want me to leave the class if we talk about it too much.’ This same student did not participate in any of the activities that were related to the recent war. They remained in the room but left their papers blank. After the class I always invited them to talk to me and share how they felt. They said:

I feel okay. I like this class. I just have no idea of what to draw or write when you ask me. I don’t feel bad, or that I don’t want to write or join in. I just have no ideas.

Usually, the group was responsive and curious; they frequently asked questions or shared examples from their history classes or other sources. Occasionally I asked them about the case of Mostar, but since these questions were mostly met by silence, I did not persist. However, one day before 11 July, when commemorative ceremonies for the Srebrenica massacre are held in Potočari and other parts of Bosnia and around the world, I found myself wondering how to address this subject and whether I should do so at all. It was important for me to understand whether I could teach something that was so close, both temporally and geographically, in a class that, until that point, had been willing to accept, understand and engage in critical discussion about similar atrocities

elsewhere in the world or at other historical times (for instance, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo) – but not in relation to their own town.

I decided to dedicate the entire session to the question of Srebrenica. I purchased all the newspapers from the kiosk nearby³ on the 11 July. Their front pages covered with topics related to the massacre and brought them into the class. I divided the group of ten students into three smaller groups and asked them to look through the newspapers then, as a group, to analyse and discuss how the event was represented, visually and linguistically, and answer various questions: what do the images portray? On which pages does the topic occur? What is the main theme? How much space does the article cover in the entire paper? What do the titles convey? When giving the task to the students, I did not provide them with information regarding the publisher, the main audience or the ethno-religious identity of each of the papers. The students cut out the titles, keywords and images, prepared posters and presented their observations to their classmates (see Figure 1, 2 & 3).

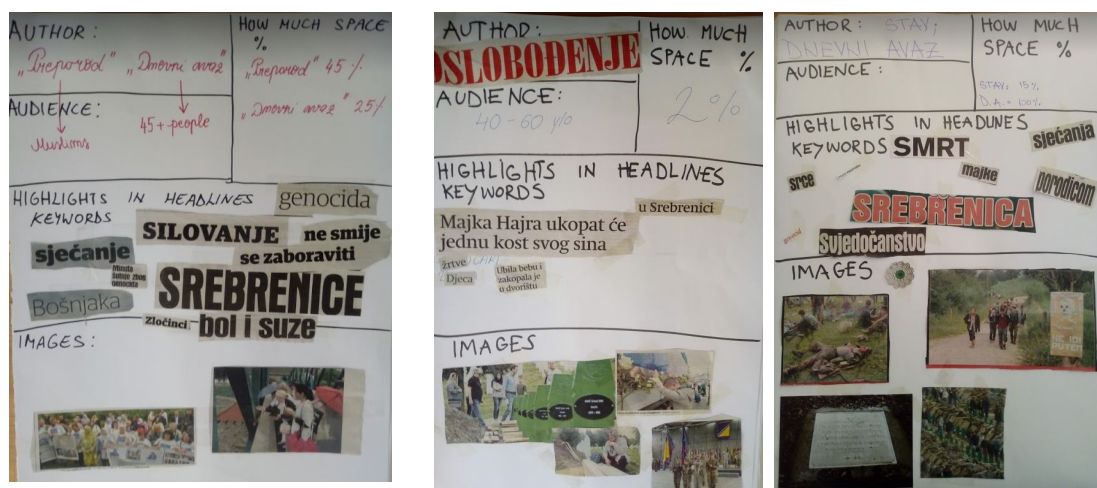


Figure 1, 2 & 3. Posters with cut-outs, photo by the author (2018).

After the groups had discussed their observations, I asked them to share their findings and present their posters to the class. One of the students was particularly vocal but, interestingly, verbalized familiar narratives from the ‘never forget’ dictum (‘We need to see these articles so that we never repeat the atrocities’), to discourses regarding the mothers of Srebrenica as ‘eternal victims’ (‘No mother can ever forgive such thing.’). None of them had visited Srebrenica or the memorial in Potočari, but they all agreed that commemoration is important and that such terrible events should not be forgotten. When I asked them whether they would visit the memorial, they responded only by nodding. When one of the students said: ‘This is just very sad’, I asked them to explain what they meant by ‘this’. They said: ‘Seeing all those sad people at the graves:

those mothers who lost sons, all these pictures ... It is not fair.' I struggled to extend the discussion beyond emotional, empathetic responses to introduce some of the previous day's topics that were related to historical events in different geographical, political and social contexts (for instance genocide in Rwanda, slavery in Caribbean etc.) or to encourage comparisons with different historical events, atrocities or lessons learned. Most complex and analytical questions remained unanswered, as if the students could only comprehend this event emotionally. The experience seemed to be internalized and for me, as a teacher and researcher, difficult to access using either direct questions or physical, non-verbal activities. I asked them whether they thought it was important to have this news in the daily papers and if the 'percentage' of the space that this news occupied was explanatory in any way. One of the students elaborated:

Preporod is obviously a Muslim newspaper, so it does not surprise me that the entire edition is reporting on this, but I also think this event is especially important for those people. I did not learn or see or read anything new in these articles today.

Furthermore, they explained that they know the newspapers report on the Srebrenica commemorations on this day, but they would not buy the papers. After the discussion that followed, it has become clear that the reason for this was the format (of traditional newspaper) and not the topic. This same student mentioned that they noticed posts on Facebook, but they 'scrolled through', because they 'knew this already.' When I noted the comment that they 'didn't learn anything new', I asked them whether it is important to have this news in the newspaper every year. One student responded:

It is an important day and, of course, newspapers will report on it. From these newspapers I didn't learn anything new because I have seen pictures from Srebrenica before. I still think it is important to remind us and I also think that many people do not know about this, because it is very far from us.

We discussed whether they are often asked in the classroom to share their opinions about the massacre and one of the students said:

I was never asked about it or asked to do what you asked me to do today. This presentation of newspaper cuttings is the first time I really looked at the pictures and thought about my feelings when I see these images. It is very sad ... Because I had to search for keywords and explain what is in the images, it was the first time I really studied them.

Another student raised a hand: ‘I was never asked about it, but we were often told about what happened there and our teacher told us about it.’ These responses helped me to pay more attention to pedagogic and didactic methods that are not often given so much space as content-centred analysis about the history curricula. The majority of the students were exposed to very common post-communist institutional teaching that incorporated lectures and the banking model of education that Freire (1970) criticized, an approach that renders students passive recipients of information and that minimizes their creative powers and ability to reflect and act upon cultural and structural norms and discourses independently and critically. I shall discuss this further in the discussion section. At this point, I simply wish to mention that this type of lecturing, as well, does not facilitate the transfer of knowledge to different contexts. It does not encourage students to understand, emotionally and cognitively, the many aspects of individual and collective action before, during and after the particular historical event. Nor does it help to contextualize historical legacies and power of transferred historical memory. Not only by their verbal responses, but also by their emotional reactions and body language during the activities, it was clear that the act of cutting out the images and keywords from the newspapers demanded a different way of engaging with the material. It required active reading and reflection as opposed to scrolling through the words and images on a screen, for instance. In order for a word or image to be selected, its meaning had to be understood, both linguistically and in relation to personal knowledge and experiences.

After we finished the class, I invited the students to accompany me to see a performance of *Srebrena krv (Silver blood)*⁴ that was staged in the evening of the same day in Narodno pozorište Mostar. The performance is about two brothers who, in the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995, try to escape to the free territory. In the interview, the director of the performance states that in Mostar, it is

especially important to perform this play for the generations that are now in a particular stage of emotional development, and are bombarded with miscellaneous, spin-twisting information and history” (Malkočević in Bljesak.info 2018, translation is mine).

Interestingly none of the students came.⁵ When I asked them the next morning about their absence, one used the excuse that they were watching the World Cup; the other one said, ‘I knew it would be sad’. From the remainder, I encountered silence. When I was reflecting on the day’s session and trying to see connections between the topics we were working on, the performance and students’ reactions, I wrote a note in my field diary on my observance of imposed remembrance and silence:

When I asked them about the performance, I didn't want to sound moralistic or judging them. I was very careful not to sound that I was expecting them to go to theatre. But I still felt that they understood as if I am trying to say 'don't you think you should go'. I feel I am self-censoring myself too, because I am very cautious not to provoke anything to put the school staff in the trouble. But it is also frustrating because I feel it doesn't lead me anywhere, because in most cases they just don't respond. I was trying to ask in different ways, but at one point it all became awkward, so I stopped. I felt frustrated because today after the class I had nothing concrete to work on; but I also had all this 'no-response' which can mean so much. I am thinking that it would be really good to have time and space to ask them to create 'remembrance' on their own. I think this could encourage some active response. But then again, wouldn't it just be another 'forced' action. Maybe they just don't want to act, react or/and do anything (12 July 2018, translation is mine).

We ended the course by discussing ways of developing resilient practices that they, as individuals, can create, rehearse and apply in their everyday lives. I introduced them to the idea of breaking the cycle of violence and abuse, as I wanted to understand on the role of silence in this process, particularly among this generation.⁶ Silence in post-conflict societies appears as a consequence of a secret, part of a painful past that cannot be communicated out loud, but it also appears as a desire to forget past traumas in order to construct new, trauma-free, post-war identities. Some scholars claim that silence, especially in families, is used as a protective mechanism (Bar-On 1996; Wiseman and Barber 2008). Survivors who desire to forget the past and adjust to new, post-conflict lives continue to believe that withholding information about the horrors they experienced is compulsory for their children's unaffected developments. In past studies, this belief has proved to be a misconception: the children who were "protected" from the traumatic stories of their parents and grandparents were sometimes affected not only in the form of ill health but also in social dysfunction, violence in their communities, and other outcomes (for more, see Milroy 2005). In the current world of omnipresence of information and relatively easily accessible sources, silencing about the past is harder to sustain. One can remain silent, but it does not mean that their traumatic story is not heard. And this is the oxymoron where I am trying to introduce the ideas of the imposed remembrance: the survivors that decide to speak out, often speak on behalf of those who remain silent too. But do the silent ones want this? Speaking out is often promoted by the need to remember; but what if those that keep silent want to forget? The circle of those that speak up, furthermore, are granted social (and political) power to design the remembrance practices, namely, *what* and *how* to remember. This often creates fixed and rigid agendas of survivors, that are not to be questioned or alternated, as this could violate the honor of those who vanished or disvalue the pain of those who survived. And where is place of post-war generations in this battle?

In the feedback provided at the end of the course, students stated that working together for a better future is necessary, and that the remembrance is an important part of it. But they felt quite uncertain when I asked them how this could be achieved and if they attend or participate in current remembrance practices. One particularly consistent response from the students concerned *the need to stop talking about the past*, bringing it up repeatedly instead of looking forward. One of the students told me:

I am really tired of these war stories. I want to live my life and just move on. Sometimes I feel I can't think who I am because I need to listen what happened before me here. Of course, I want to know what happened, but I am also tired because it never stops. I don't think this is my history and therefore I would be happy to be spared listening to it over and over again.

As one of the closing activities, I asked them to write a letter (Fig. 2 & 3) to people on the other side of the conflict. I did not ask them to write a letter of forgiveness would it be either forgiving or asking for forgiveness instead, I asked them to write down what would they like to know from 'the others'; what issues they were curious to explore and what puzzling questions they would like to address. There were two unexpected outcomes: despite no directions being given, seven of the 10 participants' letters concerned the need to forgive and work together for a peaceful future. Besides, all the letters were written in English. In answer to my question about language choice, one of the students told me: 'I did not want to be recognized and judged. I wanted to write freely about my thoughts, without thinking about being judged for who I am.' The letters were not signed, and I asked them to leave them in a box before they exit the classroom. In this way I wanted to move away from the similar studies that take into consideration the ethno-religious identities of the research participants. I do not claim that this is not important, but I also believed that the past scholarship has addressed this aspect very adequately. What I wanted to focus when reading and analysing letters was, if there is a 'generational connection'. Namely, can there be any other component that unites/divides those youth as opposed to their ethno-religious identities. For I claim, analysing different narrative in letters from this perspective would in a way continue the grand narrative of their parents – survivors, witnesses, perpetrators. Searching for the commonalities in the prisms of the(ir) generation, *the zeitgeist* they live in,

might help to hear what kind of remembrance practices they need to learn from, and how to further peace education in these terms.

Figure 2 & 3.

Decision to write letters in English as opposed to their local languages is highly symbolical. In some other parts of the workshop, I could see that ethno-religious identity for them is important; but at the same time, identifying this way immediately correlates with taking sides and hence, a symbolic ownership over one interpretation of the war history. While they want to identify as members of one or another group, they have chosen 'a distance' (through the language) which I interpret as a very clear message. Although being members of one or the other group, they want to be read as an individual, that looks into the future rather than in the past.

Srebrenica: the expedition to the 'bloody room'

After the summer school in Mostar I headed to Srebrenica, where I spent another

Dear friend,

It is challenging for me to think about problems nowadays but also their solutions. In these couple of days I have learned ~~about~~ many things and also something about our personalities. By only stepping out of our comfort zone we can change the things we have to learn, we have to try new things. It's the only way to be the person who is ready to change the world. For our future I want it to be better, fearless, safer, and just that we can live together and in peace ~~and~~ surrounded by love without anyone who is trying to get between us and change the way we think. ~~that is~~

For both of us I wish to world became a place where young people live happy and in a new way ~~that~~ where we ~~are~~ all are the same and where is no place for ~~the~~ hate.

Dear,

My biggest fear is being forgotten, not being good enough. The thought of leaving this world without leaving a trace is scary. People with so much passion and love disappearing but their souls are still burning with desire. Change can be very scary, right? Good or bad, sunny or gloomy. Being part of a world divided by borders, mountains and deep waters, do our hearts really need to experience the distance? We always blame society, but who is this society we speak of? Our minds are at fault, our closed eyes and shut mouth. Speak up! Make a change! This voice screams at us, but when do we scream back? I understand that you are worried and that is okay. Your demons are tempting, but not as scary as your passion to end all the bad in the world. I want to forget the voices of my peers saying "you will never make it", pushing me further in a hole, leaving me without a ladder. From your side I would like you to be happy and work for your future, and don't forget "the late night sky wouldn't be the same without the big white moon."

week surrounded by local and international youth engaged in volunteer activities to revive the city and help survivors, particularly elderly women who lost all or most of the male members of their families during the massacre in 1995. When I arrived, the commemoration day was over and the place had returned to its usual deserted state. The camp coordinator explained that they understand peacebuilding as 'working together to rebuild this place, bringing it back to life, and just being present here in Srebrenica.' (translation is mine) Furthermore, they explained that they occasionally organize workshops with specific topics focused on peacebuilding, but 'We believe that much more can

be learned while young people simply work and spend time together; for example, playing and sitting next to the fire in the evening' (translation is mine). While engaged in daily work activities and assigned a task group, (for instance cutting a wood, construction work, gardening, picking the berries, delivering and distributing the food among survived women etc.) I could experience this myself: while taking a rest from stacking wood for a family in the town, a debate about the war would start, or we would run across the field to take a group photo and a dark joke about undiscovered mines would crop up. The topic of war was always present, even if there were no planned activities or sessions designed to address it specifically. The only planned activities relating to the massacre in Srebrenica were the preparation of the memorial before 11 July and the group visit to the memorial centre. Since I missed the first of these, I took the opportunity to engage with the young people when we visited the memorial centre. Despite the incident described in the introduction, which left a residue of negative feelings, a group of three wanted to return to the place and explore it alone, 'in peace with no stupid interruptions' (translation is mine), as the one of them stated in an irritated manner. The day after our group visit, this trio and I headed back to the abandoned factory in Potočari. While walking there, it was mentioned to me that 'some people are talking about the "blood room"' (translation is mine); a room where one can supposedly see a bloody handprint on the wall 'from someone who was executed' (translation is mine). This information is confusing because the former car battery factory, which is today partly reconstructed as a memorial centre and gallery and partly abandoned, did not serve as a place of execution. It was—at least in theory—a safe area; a base for Dutch UN peacekeepers that became a refuge for local people after the fall of Srebrenica. However, I did not intervene as I wanted to learn what information and knowledge the students possessed and, more importantly, why they were so keen to find signs of torture and violent atrocity. As it transpired, they were on a mission to find the famous graffiti left by Dutch soldiers, but they were also very eager to find any human remains and were disappointed that no such remains existed.

While passing the largest hall, I spotted ‘bones’ on the floor that were the remains of the *One Million Bones* project that was installed in Potočari in 2015.⁷ The students were very excited about the discovery, taking photos and posting them on social media. They shared their discoveries with others when we returned to the camp (Figure 5 & 6).

Fig 4 & 5: Taking pictures of bones and showing them to the others in the camp.



Observing and reflecting on the experience of those three young people, I felt that I was not entitled to judge or condemn their approach to the Srebrenica issue. As far as possible, I tried to remain a neutral observer, merely asking questions during and after the visit and in later informal conversations. This served as my springboard for discussing and understanding aspects of the violent past.

However, it is challenging to deny their overall emotional fascination with the site, and especially with learning more about mass murder, bones, bloody remains and torture. It is even more challenging to present, analyse and discuss this, here, in the present paper, without it seeming that I am accusing these young people of some type of ‘war porn’. The excitement was evident in their body language, attitudes and narratives when talking about this experience to their fellows in the camp. In a very long conversation that I had with one of the three, I noted their visceral fascination with the acts of cruelty and their curiosity about civilians’ suffering experiences, rather than about the raw facts and policies that enabled the massacre to happen.

What led those three young people into the halls of the factory was a search for something they could identify with, the experience embodied in fellow human bodies—the pain and suffering of fellow human beings and the experience of survival. Perhaps they also felt the thrill of connecting with the past through finding concrete remains. Finding a bloody handprint on the wall is finding *real* evidence that *real* people were here—that these people, in fact, are not only numbers on a long list of names. And finding blood still there means those

people were there—not long ago. In another conversation about my observations and questions related to this, one of them told me that what interests them are the ‘stories’:

We have never heard this in the school. They told us the facts. I know everything about who was fighting, who was killed, when this happened, but being here in Srebrenica, for me, means much more. Suddenly it feels so real. I am very excited. I could return to this factory over and over again.

They returned four more times. With those visits, they were not shocked or intimidated; rather, they were entertained, as they would be at an amusement park, not knowing exactly what awaited them except the adrenaline, the thrill—the excitement.

Discussion

Up till now, several scholars provided important evidence relating to the teaching of history and war studies in post-conflict settings (Pašalić-Kreso, 2008; Berkerman & Zembylas, 2011; Ahonen, 2012). The official history teaching material in Bosnia–Herzegovina has been under critical scrutiny since the early stages of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The use of three different ethnically oriented textbooks has been problematized and has encouraged the establishment of an inclusive textbook that aims to ‘remove offensive material from textbooks’ and introduce modifications to meet ‘modern European standards’ (Karge & Batarilo 2008, 10). With little progress being made, fundamental changes are still needed in terms of curricula harmonization and teacher training for the delivery of content that promotes sociopolitical unity in diverse Bosnian society. Grassroots organizations have for years been furthering critical approaches toward history education although education policy and curricular have been and are still guarded by the state authorities.⁸

In contrast to formal history teaching, non-formal programmes pay more attention to the study of collective memory and emotional aspects in approaching violent pasts.⁹ In my own course and on the later visit to the memorial site in Potočari, I noted that the stories and testimonies were what attracted the youth; those very subjective, if not intimate, representations of and encounters with past events. What the young people learned in school was factual knowledge, divorced from the narrative domain of historical research. The official curricula, for obvious reasons, avoids emotional engagements. Aiming to present balanced, factual and objective narratives, the curricula, therefore, must be detached from personal stories, and with this, emotions. Personal narratives have always been more compelling, if sanctioned in schools because they provide a description and interpretation of historical events, not only through the prism of contemporary ideologies, myths and collectivism, but also through the personal and emotional accounts of ordinary people’s traumas. Studies of personal and collective memory have recently flooded

contemporary discourses in the social sciences and humanities and the popularity of the studies has certainly pushed traditional historical research towards the margins (Bellino & Williams, 2015; Campos-Matos, 2015). Consequently, this demands new skills of educators and poses new questions for researchers regarding how the many aspects violent histories—cognitive, emotional, embodied—should be taught.

I wish to consider these issues in relation to the question of how the post-war generation reads, accepts and reacts to collective memories concerning the war—in comparison with how they are expected to respond to such collective memories. If memorialization is a process that consoles those who suffered and enables people to honour the victims (Barsalou & Baxter, 2007, 1), what role do the young people play in the process? Mannheim (1972, 296) urged a distinction between personally acquired memories (those based on first-hand experience) and appropriated memories (those disseminated through survivors or other media). In my two cases, all the participants told me that at least one of their parents had witnessed or lived through the war. However, regarding how much their parents had told them about the war, it transpired that very few of them had access to their parents' personally acquired memories. In fact, only one student openly talked about this, having read their mother's diary, which was written during the siege of Sarajevo. The remainder of the group did not mention their parents' experiences and responded with silence when my questions related to the wartime experiences of their parents and how much they knew about them.

On the other hand, all the research participants seemed eager to share appropriated memories of events surrounding Srebrenica even though they were apparently remote (geographically and emotionally). In contrast to Ger Duijzings' notion of Srebrenica as one of the hardest examples to digest, accept and understand (2007, 145), these Mostar teenagers seemed to have the hardest time digesting the wartime antagonisms most proximal to their lives. Since it has garnered much attention from the international community, Srebrenica has gained a special place in Bosnian memorial culture and its politics have been disputed on several levels and approached through different narratives (e.g. Simić, 2009; Halilović, 2015; Jacobs, 2016). However, prioritized interest and long-term neglect of other, less notorious, war contexts (or refusal to acknowledge genocidal acts elsewhere in Bosnia–Herzegovina), have transformed Srebrenica into a metaphysical, if not surreal, place. The annual commemoration becomes a form of re-enactment with the mothers as protagonists, dressed in traditional clothing, with props of green coffins and a huge audience witnessing their sorrow, grief and mourning. The young people share the mourning, but a visit to the memorial site also generates excitement. Like Auschwitz, Srebrenica now risks becoming a 'Disneyland of Misery'.¹⁰ Those Mostar teenagers, for instance, easily related to the mourning of elderly

women who lost their sons in the massacre, but not to the ‘mourning silences’ of their own parents.

In contrast to Shahak Shapira’s *Yolocaust* project,¹¹ for example, which morally judges the consumption and commodification of memorial places, I wonder whether history teaching that deals with such events should include moral directions in terms of *how to* perceive and consume the difficult pasts. Or whether we should let future generations decide for themselves what to do with the collective memories created by survivors? I wonder if, instead of *telling young people* how to remember, we should first ask and listen: what is in the historical experiences that attracts, teaches, instruct the current generations How is this useful – if at all? Do they have their own ideas of remembrance practices that reflect also the current issues, challenges and social questions that are specific for their own generation, ie. their own historical time? Memorialization serves both to promote social recovery and to preserve the sense of victimization, injustice and desire for revenge. The owners of acquired memories may be in the best position to transform commemoration from a simple memorial practice into an instrumental one that aims to prevent similar events from happening in the future. The Srebrenica massacre is today internationally recognized as genocide and, as such, deemed morally reprehensible. The students in the Mostar classroom agreed that it was wrong, but it elicited no anxiety such as that shown by individuals during the Mostar-related film screening testimony and there were no unexpected emotional outbursts regarding Srebrenica. If there is such a difference between memorializing ‘their own space’ versus memorializing a place somewhere distant, how can/should our education system help these young people to make connections between experiences, to construct pedagogical translations between one violent atrocity and another, in order to prevent not the same—but similar ones—in the future.

One answer may perhaps be found in the concept of the transgenerational functionality of memory. It has been agreed by memory scholars that collective memory is never a mere reflection of the past, but always a mediated reflection of the past that can be linked to the present and future (Polkinghorne, 1998; Assmann, 2007; Haukanes and Trnka, 2013). It is a result of past experiences, present needs and future aspirations. Therefore, remembrance practices are established to empower the present and to imagine the future; if past experiences are presented to us, we can imagine what the future holds for individuals and societies (Kerby, 1991; Koselleck, 2004; Natzmer, 2002; Palmberger and Tošić, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1998). However, in most cases, the generations of survivors, witnesses and perpetrators construct collective memory through their personally acquired memories. This memory created by one generation is then passed to the post-war generation, but not necessarily in the way that generation wants to be served. If we accept the notion that present memory serves future aspirations, it follows that future generations passively accept their acquired

memories, with no critical reflection or fresh response, and an accepted version of social history is constructed out of the memories of their predecessors. This perspective marks every new generation as a mere carrier of past agendas, lacking critical appraisal and autonomous action. Where this occurs, this approach condemns every new generation to simply fulfil the future aspirations of their parents. Social institutions, like schools and media largely support this reproduction of collective memory agendas. However, what the experiences I've described in this paper suggest is that, by creating a space for alternative voice of youth, we may hear that what the new generations aspire for is changing, and this open new challenges for memorialisation to reach them in a meaningful way.

In conversations in both Mostar and Srebrenica, the students expressed an overload of remembrance and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the omnipresence of the war and the past in general. Many legal cases are still open, many survivors are still waiting for justice and plenty of trials and prosecutions are continuing. Moreover, political parties tend to use the war legacy to legitimate their political agendas. While it is understandable that those who lived through the war are attached to their memories and no one should take that away from them, pressuring post-war youth into remembrance and a utopian belief that never forgetting means never repeating seems neither constructive nor pedagogically sound.

When survivors and witnesses control what is remembered, how and why, the practices they create also generate a certain amount of trauma and frustration over slow sociopolitical change. If young people do not respond to this as expected, it causes further anger and disappointment among those who suffered losses and have remained traumatized because of the war. Since the survivors and/or witnesses believe that they 'own' the memories and are therefore the guardians of 'true', 'right' and 'proper' remembrance practices, happy faces and selfies will never be welcomed. Nevertheless, paying closer attention to the responses of young people—to happy and playful faces on the photos from Auschwitz or giggling, bored and napping students during painful video clips of mass executions—communicates to educators the need to shift gears perhaps and create different opportunities, knowledge, and emotional literacy for more effective 'never again' interventions in the futures of those young people. Perhaps their responses indicate that an agenda that is formed by others and rooted in the past is simply not an acceptable framework for their future.

Another angle that we need to consider more carefully in educating about violent pasts is the lack of teacher training to prepare teachers *to witness student's learning processes, mechanisms of coping with the history that is not really theirs*, and to witness without judging – this also means learning how to respond to hatred, rage and the toxic responses in the form of political

radicalisation Effective preparation of teachers would facilitate such witnessing that avoids responses that might be insulting to survivors or descendants, such as mimicry, voyeurism, or spectatorship (Eppert and Simon, 1997, 179). Instead of dictating proper behaviour during visits to memorial sites, teachers may prioritize emotional literacy over moral judgements. During my classes in Mostar and the visit to Srebrenica, the emotional reactions were definitely some of the most important components—and considerably more challenging than conveying fact-based knowledge through lectures. Few students have highlighted the emotional aspects of testimonies and personal sharing, during the activities (for instance while writing letters) or during conversation in the circle during the classes. Nevertheless, past studies show that both teacher education generally (Whitted, 2011; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Waajida, Garnerb and Owen, 2013) and post-conflict history teaching in particular (Zembylas 2008) have paid very little attention to the social and emotional development of teachers. Teachers must develop their own emotional literacy and create trauma-informed classes in order to deal with the emotional dynamics of their students. The teacher's task, write Eppert and Simon (1997, 189), is to 'create conditions and means for moving beyond attempts to speak that falter into silence or regress into familiar and potentially debilitating frames of reference'. As I have struggled to break the silence with students about the violent local events in Mostar, I assume that the students had not previously had many opportunities to address these questions in either history classes or other courses during their schooling. Furthermore, students' inability to relate the difficult pasts of slavery, the Holocaust and Srebrenica to their local (family) histories, shows the limits of the formal school education they have received in accomplishing one of memorialization's functions: to appraise past events in order to understand one's contemporary perceptions and actions. Without skills of emotional literacy, students will struggle to deduce, process and apply historical lessons in a critical, independent and reflective manner. However, nurturing emotional literacy among the students demands also trained teachers with the ability to recognize and accurately label and respond to the emotional reactions of students; ability to predict and tackle the triggers; and prevent retraumatization or deepening PTSD, etc. When teachers are not skilled enough to acknowledge the emotional journeys of all students in the classroom and are not consciously making space for emotions, they might simply shut down the student when faced by the controversial encounter. Not embracing the spectrum of emotions, from rage to sympathy, adds to the culture of historical silence and sometimes collective amnesia. Allocating couple of minutes in the classroom to reflect and evaluate emotional state of students, and sharing teacher's own experiences, can enhance trust between the teacher and students, and provides a sense of mutual learning experience.

Memorialization seems to serve different purposes for different generations (see Barsalou and Baxter 2007, 4). While those who survived or witnessed the atrocities memorialize in order to mourn, to seek truth, reconciliation and social

recovery, the post-war generation is expected to witness and participate in those practices in order to learn and project the lessons of the past onto their future. In Mostar, for instance, where the venue of the summer camp was in one of the infamous ‘two schools under one roof’,¹² a participant from this school told me that they had never been in the same classroom with anyone from the other side of the conflict prior to attending this school. Before the class began, they felt anxious and even afraid:

I was surprised that this class is no different from those in my school. I expected that we would have a lot of fights, but we don't, and it's good that the official language of this school is English. It stops me thinking of someone as being from the other side.

In a camp in Srebrenica, I witnessed the conversation of a 17-year-old participant from Istočno Sarajevo (a mostly Serb-dominated part of the town) who was attending the camp for the second time. Earlier, the camp coordinator had explained to me that their mother was seriously concerned about their visit to Srebrenica and feared for their safety. During the visit to the memorial site in Potočari, this Bosnian Serb and his Bosniak companion were photographed and both of them posted the picture on Facebook. One of them added a caption:



Figure 6: Facebook post from memorial centre in Potočari (retrived 10 January 2019)

We were sitting there in silence and suffering. It hurts to look at this, but one finds it hard to leave. It is impossible to understand this horrific act against other people or what happens to someone to make them willing to commit such acts. Today, we, /Bosniak's name/ and /Serb' name/, a Bosnian girl and Serb boy, two young people who came to Potočari together, were horrified by what the people before us did and we have sworn to do everything we can to prevent this happening to us—or ever again! (Translation is mine).

I read this quotation as a cultural narrative transferred that they have received from parents, the media, schools and institutions. If we look back to the posters that students in Mostar created and the keywords that they selected from the articles (for instance: *sjećanje* (memory), *ne smije se zaboraviti* (should not be forgotten), *bol i suze* (grief and tears)), we can see the similarity in the vocabulary. I read this as (unconscious) internalization of the collective memory and socially desired witnessing and use of the memorial space. There is an future aspiration of those two youth—to live in peace—but in this picture they are also a ‘proof’ that the future aspiration of the war survivors and witnesses—for two sides to reconcile—have succeeded. Why, then, problematize this?

In adopting a critical position toward the narrative, I am not accusing the young people of wrongdoing, but I want to use this example to explore the issue of how young people are expected to respond to the commemorative needs of those who survived the atrocities and whether there are ‘right’, ‘proper’ and socially desirable commemorative practices. If one assumes that the message of this post actually reflects that of a different generation, it is interesting to consider what a constructive, future-oriented alternative might be. Public spaces, like the media, always have target audiences and are often subject to market needs, having to provide consumers with what they want. Hence, the images and narratives found in the media are designed to satisfy the audience rather than problematize issues. The reality, on the other hand, changes daily as new trials are held, new mass graves are discovered, and new evidence is provided. As generations pass away, consumers eventually change, and the descendants of survivors become the active readers.

Considering the reach of the media, the Facebook post is important. It received a relatively small number of ‘likes’ (75). For comparison, I scrolled through this person’s other pictures—mostly self-portraits—and saw that, on average, she receives 150–200 likes per post, yet this post was seen by many more people than the number of likes indicates. Hence, the discrepancy warrants scrutiny, poses questions and invites a positive and constructive dialogue. Once again, I have no intention of doubting the integrity of the post, but I see the similarities with the infamous Auschwitz selfies: the narrative is simplified and idealized. My critical hesitancy arises from the experiences in both examples discussed here, where Srebrenica is somehow an artificial, exclusive and almost imaginary¹³ memorial space that restricts the horrific scale of human violence to safe and narrow pedagogical boundaries. My concern is that the lessons are unlikely to remain with a learner once they leave the venue.

To sum up, these two cases equipped me with the following guidelines for further teaching. Firstly, it is important to deliver more education about the past outside of the classroom and the usual context of a history lecture. Even though the working camp in Srebrenica has activities that relate directly to remembrance and education about the past of this particular venue (such as

preparing the memorial site for the commemoration on 11 July, cleaning afterwards, or visiting the memorial centre), most of the volunteers' time was spent in mixed groups, engaged in apparently informal activities. One such activity involved chopping wood for one of the 'mothers of Srebrenica' and delivering a daily warm meal to her. This visit to a survivor, a living person in a 'live space' (the city) as opposed to a dead person in a memorial cemetery, prompted one of the volunteers to visit this woman again and start to learn on their own initiative.

Another factor that I noted is the importance of teaching history by incorporating historical events in the broader context of the humanities and social sciences, rather than teaching them separately and decontextualizing them. My own background in social and political sciences is beneficial in explaining historical events from the perspective of social phenomena. Among other examples, I might call upon the systemic use of rape and sexual violence in the war to reflect on wider gender-based and sexual oppression, both in the past and today, in peace or in conflict. We still fail miserably to understand Auschwitz and Srebrenica as social and political phenomena, rather than merely historical ones, and this is exactly where I see the importance of creating diverse collective memories, where young people can speak also from the perspective of their generation and not just ethno-religious group. Since history is often burdensome for the survivors, they should be given the opportunity to focus first and fully on their own recovery, leaving the post-war generation in charge of the creating the future – perhaps even without memory. However, I do not believe that they can create a truly alternative future if they are continuously exposed to pressure to remember the past and engage in the remembrance practices of older generations with other agendas.

While, for the survivors, achieving justice is one of the most important incentives for insisting on certain memorial narratives, for young people it is important to understand not only who the victims and perpetrators were or how many and which people were killed, but how individual human beings, anywhere in the world, including themselves, can reach the point of committing such atrocities and what they can do to prevent it. Young people need to understand the stages of the process that leads to mass executions and what the early warning signs of that process are. Those lessons have already been incorporated in peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes. However, civic education, ethics, moral philosophy and peacebuilding are still, too often, the preserve of nonformal education programmes only. There is a long way to go before they are incorporated in formal history education curricula and pedagogy.

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¹ MSYP is a non-profit, free summer educational programme supported by local and international organizations and businesses. It aims to empower youth aged 14-19 from Mostar and the surrounding area with opportunities in their educational, social and professional aspirations. The participation is voluntary, but highly competitive as the programme is very popular among the youth. Dozens of students apply every year, but only limited spaces are offered. There is a lot of returning students as well. I would like to emphasize that this is a selected, very exclusive group of highly motivated, curious, open-minded cohort of the students. I am aware that the experience in a regular school during the school year would be probably very different. More information about MSYP: <https://mostarsyp.org>.

² A participant in Mostar asked, if they can identify by gender, and surprisingly enough, three out of 10 have claimed that they prefer no gender pronoun, and two explicitly asked to use 'them' instead of he or she. In this vein, I decided to omit also other identity layers. Please see for more explanation: p. 12.

³ Stav, Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje are all Sarajevo-based newspapers and magazines. Those were the papers that on 11 July reported the commemorations on the front page and were available in the three kiosks in Mostar that I visited; hence I chose those newspapers by the visibility of the issue: I entered the kiosk and collected those with Srebrenica on the cover, without inspecting the content inside. As an interesting observation, in Mostar one can also buy newspapers that are printed in Herzegovina; however, none of those papers had a Srebrenica commemoration on the front page. The same day, Croatia was playing in the semi-final of World Cup and this was the main feature that the Herzegovian newspapers reported on their cover pages.

⁴ As a matter of fact, I realized there were no young people in the audience at all; depending on the estimated age of the spectators, I would assume they were all of the generation that witnessed or/and survived the war, but I have no exact information on this—nor do I have any information on the ethnic origin of the audience.

⁵ On the same day, the Croatian national soccer team was playing in the World Cup semi-final and the entire city seemed even more divided than usual. While the east side of the town is mostly populated by Bosniaks, local people were following both the commemoration and the match—both in silence. In complete contrast was the atmosphere on the west side, inhabited mainly by Bosnian Croats; chairs in bars were overlaid with textiles mimicking the white-and-red cubes of Croatian flags; flags were hung from apartment buildings and waved from cars. However, the coincidence of these two events might also explain how students were spending their evening.

⁶ As a material I used my own text that discusses the creation and social preservation of collective silences, see here: AUTHOR.

⁷ The Sarajevo-based NGO Post-Conflict Research Centre partnered with the US-based Art of Revolution to establish the project for the 20th Commemoration of the Genocide in Srebrenica. This project previously brought together over 2,500 volunteers from across the United States to lay out 1,000,000 handcrafted bones in the National Mall in Washington, D.C. as a visible protest against ongoing genocide and mass atrocity occurring around the world. For more see: <http://www.onemillionbones.net/> (retrieved: 7 January 2019).

⁸ Lately more and more programs run and delivered in collaboration between Ministries of Education, Pedagogical Institute and international initiatives and organizations, are being offered to help to reform history education in official institutions; among them for instance Forum ZFD, EuroClio-HIP, YIHR, Dijalog za budućnost.

⁹ See for instance projects run by: Pro-budućnost (<https://probuducnost.ba/>); TPO Foundation (www.tpo.ba); Most Mira (www.mostmiraproject.org), Centar za izgradnju mira (www.unvocim.net).

¹⁰ Paraphrasing the term used for discussing the 'dark tourism' in Auschwitz, available here: <http://bocktherobber.com/2013/10/has-auschwitz-become-the-disneyland-of-misery/>.

¹¹ *Yolocaust* project of Israeli-German artist Shahak Shapira has attracted international academic and public interest by raising awareness of 'appropriate' commemorative and remembrance practices among generations of young Westerners who are temporally, and often geographically, distant from the mass atrocities of the Holocaust and the consequences and/or legacies of collective violence. For more see: <https://yolocaust.de/>

¹² This phenomenon is known as one of the worst examples in the European educational sphere and many people have openly criticized it and called for change. In the meantime, local students that attend these schools have taken the initiative in their own hands. In some places, like Jajce and Travnik, they even achieved the agreement that two different ethnic groups could attend the same class. Several local and international newspapers reported about the protests (see for instance Sito-Sucic 2017); and students also engaged in writing about their positions (see blog post by Jahic 2018).

¹³ This imaginary space does not in any sense connote or imply that the massacre did not happen or that any facts or evidence are invented. This paper does not discuss the massacre as such but rather teaching of 'Srebrenica' as an (European) example of post-Holocaust genocide. Due to its international recognition, it is not only subjected to contested memories and politicization, but also to a predatory consumerist market.