Contesting Memories of Genocide
The Memorialization of Srebrenica, Bosnia i Herzegovina

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Abstract
While the carnage wrought by armies and militias during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War may have ended, the conflict over human rights, remembrance, history, and memory continue to be waged in the fragile socio-political terrain that defines contemporary Bosnia i Herzegovina (BiH). This painful contradiction is most apparent in the ongoing communal and national battles over the existence of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide (SPMCC). Specifically, I explore the contested memories of the SPMCC and the claims, in the forms of mnemonic lenses, made by Srebrenica’s victims and perpetrators. This includes identifying the constructive and destructive aspects of Srebrenica’s memorialization in a community where the genocide’s survivors and perpetrators live alongside one another. I therefore review the SPMCC’s opportunities and challenges in connecting the site’s violent past to its tentative present, including whether it contributes to a more tolerant and peaceful BiH.
Abbreviations

ARBiH: Army of Bosnia i Herzegovina
BiH: Bosnia i Herzegovina
Bosniak: Bosnian Muslim
Dayton Agreement: General Framework Agreement on Peace
DutchBat: Dutch United Nations Peacekeeping Battalion
FBiH: Federation of Bosnia i Herzegovina
ICG: International Crisis Group
ICJ: International Court of Justice
ICMP: International Commission on Missing Persons
ICSC: International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
JNA: Yugoslav People’s Army
RBiH: Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina
RS: Republika Srpska
SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SPMCC: Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide
SoC: Site of Conscience
SRBiH: Socialist Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina
OHR: Office of the High Representative
UN: United Nations
US: United States
VRS: Bosnian Serb Army
**Research Design**

My research focuses upon whether the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide (SPMCC) plays an important role in bringing together Bosnia i Herzegovina’s (BiH) three ethnic groups (e.g., Bosniak, Bosnian Serb, and Bosnian Croat) to reconcile the painful impact of the Srebrenica genocide so as to promote tolerance and education for future generations. I argue that the SPMCC is a uniquely suited in BiH to accomplish these aims because it co-exists as a site of mass atrocities, of historical memory, of pain, of denial, and of spatial significance. The SPMCC, therefore, embodies the opportunity to serve as 1) a public memorial connecting its violent past to its tentative present; 2) a societal healing mechanism; and 3) an international and educational research center in post-conflict BiH.

As such, I contend that the SPMCC retains the ability to contribute to a democratic discourse about healing, tolerance, and education for future generations in the wake of the Srebrenica genocide, both in the country and the international community. The design of this research follows 12 weeks of in-country fieldwork I conducted during the summer of 2011, including six types of data collection. These are: 1) participation in the 2011 Summer University Srebrenica (SUS) program; 2) an analysis of the SPMCC’s site; 3) site visits throughout the Srebrenica opština; 4) independent site visits and attendance at select commemorations across the country; 5) a review of the existing literature about the Srebrenica genocide and the SPMCC; and 6) interviews conducted across six subject groups. Between 2010 and 2012, I spent six cumulative months in-country.
**Research Methods**

In 2011 I returned to BiH for the four-week SUS program and conducted an additional eight weeks of independent field research, which included 32 interviews.\(^1\) My research included an extensive investigation of the SPMCC facility, including a review of the SPMCC’s daily operations and numerous visits (e.g., guided tours with genocide survivors; SPMCC staff members; and former soldiers from the Dutch United Nations Peacekeeping Battalion; as well as on my own).

I also met with victims’ associations and actors involved with the SPMCC’s creation; observed tour group participants and site visitors; and attended the prayer ceremony held on the 11\(^{th}\) of each month (a separate service from the annual 11 July commemoration). Virtually every single aspect about the Bosnian War and its post-conflict landscape has been written about from sociological, anthropological, medical, political, historic, geographic, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, psychiatric, legal, and religious vantage points. I focused on the literature most relevant to the Srebrenica genocide and the SPMCC while drawing upon sources most connected with the background of the Bosnian War. I also collected valuable written material during my travels. Due to linguistic issues, I referenced various Balkan writers whose works were either written in and/or translated into English.

While based in Srebrenica, I conducted site visits to several mountain villages and hamlets across the *opština*, including stops at homes rebuilt by survivors; bombing sites; mass grave locations; the former United Nations Outpost “F” (OP Foxtrot);\(^2\) the former front lines between the Army of the Republic of BiH (ARBiH) and the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS);

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\(^1\) I participated in the SUS program in 2010 and subsequently both participated and volunteered in it during 2011 and 2012. For more information, see: [http://sus.potocarimc.ba/](http://sus.potocarimc.ba/).

\(^2\) OP Foxtrot was a critical UN Outpost for the VRS’s strategy to infiltrate Srebrenica. It was subject to heavy shelling during the war and is still surrounded by an active minefield. For more information, see “Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime” by Jan Willem Honig (pages 7-11, 13).
numerous local graves; and memorial stones that dot the opština in both destroyed and partially reconstructed villages. Because nearly all of the Srebrenica opština’s inhabitants were ethnically cleansed from their homes, survivors live scattered throughout BiH in the Federation of Bosnia i Herzegovina (BiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS). Thus, it was important to visit other cities where Srebrenica’s survivors currently live, including Sarajevo and Tuzla. In addition, I conducted site visits to numerous local memorials and cemeteries; the rebuilt town of Kozarac; the torture and rape camps in Omarska and Trnopolje; the annual commemoration of the Omarska camp’s liberation; the site of a massacre in Ahmići; and a multi-ethnic commemoration of the International Day of the Missing in Brčko. I also visited Jasenovac, the second largest World War II concentration camp, memorialized both in BiH and Croatia.

I conducted 32 interviews across six different groups. These included: 1) the staff of the SPMCC; 2) domestic academics, experts, and civil society organizations with relationships with the SPMCC; 3) national BiH staff members and government ministers who were also executive board members of the SPMCC; 4) staff members from national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); 5) international staff members of the Bosnian War Crimes Chamber (part of the Court of BiH); and 6) victims’ associations and residents. Collectively, these interview subjects represent an informed spectrum of the Srebrenica genocide’s factual, emotional, legal, and forensic history and legacy. The diversity of the interview subjects’ backgrounds added to the depth of my findings since there was an equal representation of men and women, both young and old, as well as a mixture of perspectives from survivors, government officials and international workers.

The majority of interviews were conducted in English; the rest were conducted in Bosnian with the support of a local translator. Each interview followed an approved questionnaire, with certain questions omitted and/or modified depending upon the specific
response, tone of the overall conversation, and/or the interview subject’s sensitivities. The average length of the interview was approximately 45 minutes and followed a semi-structured conversational format. In some cases (especially with all of the victims’ associations), the interview subject(s) became comfortable with me and invited other members of their organizations to join, thus extending our conversation by a few hours over coffee. In other cases, the interview subject clearly pointed out which parts of our conversation were ‘on’ or ‘off the record’. After explaining the purpose of my research (either in English or Bosnian), all interview subjects signed the New York University Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects (UCAIHS) consent forms (in either English or Bosnian) indicating their permission to be interviewed and recorded by me (in the presence of a translator). In some cases, especially with individuals from the Bosnian War Crimes Chamber and international NGOs, I was given approval to use the details of our conversation but not refer to them by name and/or organization.

**Research Challenges**

Several hundred researchers, journalists, practitioners, scholars, and students have visited BiH, conducting extensive interviews with the population both during and after the war. Over the years, interview fatigue has affected the population with hundreds of requests to speak. These researchers often come for short periods and do not share their research with their interviewees. Nor have the vast majority of interviewees seen any sort of transformation in their society or personal lives as a result. These issues make finding willing people to interview very difficult.

The majority of BiH is comprised of small towns and villages where people know intimate details about one another. This type of communal life makes it difficult for people to speak out for fear of retribution or being ostracized by their neighbors. Many times interviewees

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3 The sole person who did not sign the consent form was a key representative from one of the groups of Mothers. In this case, the interview took place among a group of 50 women in the cemetery following the religious service held on 11 August 2011.
focus upon the politicized discourse rather than telling you what they really think. Through numerous missteps, I learned it was critical to know the ethnicity of the person with whom I was speaking although this type of ethnic scrutiny runs contrary to my values as an American. I also had to be careful to avoid the perception of being too sympathetic to one group as I could easily lose the credibility or trust of the other. This is one of the reasons why I was unable to interview Bosnian Serbs given that my primary contacts were with Bosniaks. In the summer of 2015, when conducting my in-country fieldwork for my dissertation at Rutgers University (New Jersey, USA), I will attempt to network with Bosnian Serbs to ensure that my research is balanced, conducting interviews and gathering qualitative data from both mnemonic communities.

The translator is the researcher’s de-facto ‘gate keeper’. S/he is the person who establishes primary contact with potential subjects and can make it either easy or difficult to access specific communities and individuals. Interviewees frequently only feel at ease with a translator of the same ethnicity since so much of the discussion is highly contentious. The translator may also harbor personal issues in reaching out to interview subjects who do not share the same interpretation of the war’s events. For example, my translator was a Bosniak from the Srebrenica opština and was not at all comfortable reaching out to Bosnian Serbs to explain the nature of my research. The few Bosnian Serbs he did connect with chose not to be interviewed. Thus, to interview Bosnian Serbs required a separate translator and extensive time networking that I had not anticipated (thus the second reason I did not interview Bosnian Serbs).

While the general climate within Srebrenica is safe, discussing the genocide and interviewing subjects at a public café requires a constant awareness of the other customers nearby. The presence of any international person conducting interviews can be frustrated by the
fact that everyone in the town is aware that these interviews are taking place. At the same time, being a female researcher provided an additional challenge. The majority of people in cafés and in public life are men. In many small towns across BiH the socio-cultural norm is that, outside of marriage, men and women seen together in public are assumed to be having sexual relations. Because of this, on two separate instances, my interactions with married men with whom I established good relationships, were called into question.

Finally, a word must be said regarding the security issues, both to my physical persona and emotional state. I took extra precautions to minimize attention by maintaining modest dress and was always careful when traveling alone so as to ward off unwanted and/or aggressive attention and sexual advances. I experienced two incredibly terrifying, sexually-intimidating situations that made me prioritize my safety over data collection. Living in Srebrenica takes its toll and brings up mixed feelings as an outsider. On the one hand, the atmosphere leading up to the 11 July commemoration is joyous as friends and families of the diaspora reunite. On the other hand, I became hysterical watching family members burying their loved ones during the commemoration.

It was difficult for me to digest so many stories of survival and loss discussed in the interviews, yet remaining focused during these conversations was essential. Visiting many killing sites, local memorials, devastated villages, and hostile territories further heightened the state of trauma in which I was operating. There were many times when I was too stunned to speak; I had to take special measures to ensure that I was able to find a balance between empathy

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4 When working with my translator or local resident to approach a potential interviewee, family members or colleagues often negatively intervened or became frustrated that they themselves were not asked. In addition, while the vast majority of residents were kind and accommodating on the surface, only after living in the town for several weeks did I learn of the underlying hostilities caused by my presence.
for others and my own emotional wellbeing. And yet, the will to live and prosper was present within everyone I met even while intermixed with utter personal devastation. In spite of it all, I consistently come away infused with the hope to which the interviewees frequently alluded.
Introduction

Signed by all parties in November 1995, the General Framework Agreement on Peace (Dayton Agreement) brought an end to the 1992-1995 Bosnian War (Silber and Little 1997). Trials for accused war criminals continue to be heard by international, national, entity, and canton level courts for a wide range of war crimes and mass atrocities. Importantly, though, the ‘peace’ did not include a clear winner or loser, in the conventional sense, a fact that still has a tremendous impact on the country, especially as it relates to memorialization. This painful contradiction is most apparent in the communal and national battles over the creation of memorials at former sites of atrocity. These issues constitute the newly drawn battle lines over memory when the shooting stops.

While the carnage wrought by armies and militias may have ended, the wars over memory and remembrance continue to be waged in the fragile socio-political terrain that defines contemporary Bosnia i Herzegovina (BiH). In this paper I analyze the ongoing contestation about the 1995 Srebrenica genocide between the Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) and Bosnian Serb mnemonic communities as it relates to the site where the genocide formally began: outside the former Battery Factory where the United Nations (UN) Dutch Peacekeepers (DutchBat) were stationed in the village of Potočari during the war. Memories of the Srebrenica genocide remain contested to this day and the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide (SPMCC) in BiH has become an iconic and infamous representation of this historic tragedy across the globe.  

cemetery and ceremonial location for the annual 11 July commemoration as well as local monthly religious services.

Importantly, the SPMCC was mandated into existence by the international community and is therefore unique as all other Bosnian memorialization mnemonic battles are led—and contested by—the local communities in which the sites are located. Moreover, the SPMCC operates within a broader historical culture of genocide denial, ethno-nationalist rhetoric, and educational segregation amongst Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs. Against this backdrop, I will explore the dynamics over the memory of the SPMCC and the claims, in the forms of mnemonic lenses, made by these two mnemonic communities.

In Part One, I provide a synopsis of the events leading up to the Srebrenica genocide. In Part Two, I assess the dynamics of the Srebrenica genocide and how its two mnemonic communities of survivors and perpetrators—Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs—remember and/or confront the past. In Part Three, I analyze the SPMCC’s symbolic and practical roles in Bosnian memorialization. I conclude with reflections about the ways in which the SPMCC contributes both to the positive and negative aspects of the memorialization of the Srebrenica genocide. In addition to using secondary sources, I will include primary source data collected during my fieldwork in Srebrenica in 2011.6

Dissolution, Genocide, and Aftermath

Formally christened in 1918 at the end of World War I as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the country was renamed the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in

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6 My 2011 fieldwork in BiH was approved by New York University’s (NYU) Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects (UCAIHS) for use in my NYU Center for Global Affairs master’s thesis on the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery to the Victims of the 1995 Genocide. I subsequently traveled to BiH for an additional three months in 2012 conducting informal participant observation as well as visiting seven of the Srebrenica execution sites on 13 July 2012 with a small group of survivors. This research will form the initial basis of my dissertation at Rutgers University (New Jersey, USA).
1963. The SFRY was a union of six separate Socialist Republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, BiH, Macedonia, and Montenegro, each with its own governmental institutions) and two autonomous provinces within Serbia (Kosovo and Vojvodina) (Woodward 1995: 31). Under the leadership of President Josip Broz Tito (Tito), the Yugoslav supranational identity was promoted to unite the varying ethnic groups under a common political umbrella (Bringa 1995: 27). The violent legacies of inter-ethnic warfare in BiH led by the Croatian Fascists (Ustaše) of the World War II Nazi puppet state of the Independent State of Croatia, however, were never addressed (Denich 2003:191-192; Woodward 1995: 239-240).

Instead, Tito used his “police state apparatus” to clamp down on nationalist claims by Croatia and Serbia (Zimmermann 1999: 252). Concurrently, this obscured a larger problem: Bosniaks were considered a religious group but not a national one, as were the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, leaving open the question about which national group was the ‘rightful’ leader of BiH (Friedman 1996: 161; Toal and Dalhman 2011: 50). As Tito’s influence waned and following his death in 1980, World War II’s long suppressed traumas began to resurface in the form of nationalist sentiment and ethnic agitation (West 1994: 318). Concomitantly, Serbia began jostling for control of the SFRY (Friedman 1996: 178; Toal and Dalhman 2011: 53). Nevertheless, an integrated socio-cultural climate continued to exist within BiH up until ethno-nationalist rhetoric about a Greater Serbia entered the political discourse in the late 1980s/early 1990s (Woodward 1995: 90 & 225).

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8 A future draft of this paper will include more background on the challenges of creating a pan-Yugoslav identity immediately after World War II.
The Bosnian War began on 6 April 1992 in Sarajevo. It followed what was then called the Socialist Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina’s (SRBiH) 1992 referendum to formally secede from SFRY, thus becoming the Republic of Bosnia i Herzegovina (RBiH) (Woodward 1995: 235). This declaration galvanized Serbia, led by then Prime Minister Slobodan Milosević to declare war, using the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) as Serbia’s proxy along with the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) and independent Serbian and Bosnian Serb militias, led by Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić (Toal and Dalhman 2011: 7; Woodward 1995: 262).10

The Drina Valley (Podrinje) is the eastern part of BiH that borders Serbia. It is this portion of land where the VRS and its associated militias first began their campaign of ethnic cleansing (etičko čišćenje) upon the Bosnian War’s outbreak (Wagner 2008: 27). Formerly home to 37,000 residents of mixed ethnicities with a majority of Bosniak inhabitants, the VRS sought to ethnically cleanse the entire Srebrenica district (opština) of all Bosniaks (Honig 1996: xvii). Within the greater Srebrenica region, which includes the five opštine of Srebrenica, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Rogatica, and Višegrad, 296 villages were ethnically cleansed during the first three months of the war (Toljaga 2010). In 1993, the Srebrenica enclave was declared one of six humanitarian ‘Safe Areas’ by UN Security Council Resolutions 819 and 824.11 On 11 July 1995 the Srebrenica enclave, theoretically under the protection of DutchBat, was overrun by the VRS.

Between the 11th and 22nd of July, nearly half of the 10,000-15,000 Bosniak men and boys who fled through the forest, and nearly all the men and boys gathered in the exterior

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10 Separate aggression campaigns were carried out by the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) which battled both the VRS and the Army of the Republic of BiH (ARBiH), led by Bosniaks. Additionally, after the war began, there were also calls by Croatian President Franco Tudjman for a “Greater Croatia.” To keep this argument focused, however, I have chosen not to delve into these complexities as it was under the behest of Milosević that the war began and was primarily waged. See “Works Cited” for related sources.

surroundings of the Battery Factory—approximately 8,372 in total—were systematically
executed (Honig 1996: 49). In a move reminiscent of the extermination selections by the Nazis,
women and girls were forcibly bused to Tuzla (in the then free territory controlled by the Army
of Bosnia i Herzegovina (ARBiH)); the men and boys were taken to nearby areas and
subsequently murdered. Thus, the last time these families saw one another was on the highway in
front of the Battery Factory. All of this took place in full view of the DutchBat soldiers.

These killings became the single largest massacre to take place on the European continent
since World War II and were formerly declared Genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal
for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) during the Radislav Krstić case (ICTY Case IT-98-33).¹² A
lengthy and controversial debate has long raged about whether the DutchBat leadership knew
was happening right in front of their eyes (Comitia 2011).¹³ Mladić was indicted for both his role
in masterminding the Srebrenica genocide and “persecutions, extermination, murder, deportation,
inhumane acts, terror, unlawful attacks, [and the] taking of hostages;” his trial began in July 2012
(ICTY Case Information Sheet IT-09-92). The trial against Karadžić, accused of “genocide,

¹² The ICTY was established by the UN in 1993 and was the first European war crimes tribunal since the Nuremberg
Krstić was sentenced to 35 years in prison for his role in “aiding and abetting genocide, murders, extermination and
persecutions” in Srebrenica.
¹³ The role of DutchBat during the Srebrenica genocide is outside the scope of this paper. Most recently, the
Srebrenica survivor, Mr. Hasan Nuhanović, won a case against the Dutch government which stated that the
government was responsible for the deaths of his brother, father, and a third man during the genocide because they
were evicted by DutchBat from the Battery Factory. Mr. Nuhanović, then in his early 20s, worked as translator for
DutchBat. His father, Biro, also translated contentious negotiations between Mladić and the DutchBat commander
Thom Karremans. Initially able to protect his mother, father, and younger brother inside the Battery Factory, they
were eventually expelled by DutchBat, which had been ordered by the VRS to remove all refugees from the facility.
Only Nuhanović himself was given permission to stay on the premises while his family left the compound. The last
time Nuhanović saw his family was immediately outside the SPMCC’s current conference rooms. His father,
mother, and brother were subsequently murdered in different locations in the Srebrenica opština. Nuhanović buried
his father in July 2011. For more information, see: http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Case/1005/The-
Netherlands-v-Nuhanovi%C4%87/. Additionally, the Dutch government was found responsible for the deaths of 300
people during the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. For more information, see:
Both accessed on 18 August 2014.
persecutions, extermination, murder, deportation, and inhumane acts,” in addition to other charges, began in March 2010 (ICTY Case Information Sheet IT-95-5/18).

Milosević was indicted for crimes against Bosniaks in BiH, Croatia, and Kosovo, including “the widespread killing of thousands” and “the causing of serious bodily and mental harm to thousands.”  

Ironically, on 11 March 2006 he died of a natural death before a verdict was reached in the trial (ICTY Case Information Sheet 02-54). Separately, in 2007 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) followed up with its own ruling regarding Serbia’s involvement in the Srebrenica genocide. While the ICJ held that Serbia was not responsible for actually committing the genocide, the country did in fact violate its obligations under the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention) (ICJ Judgment 2007). Following the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995, the Srebrenica opština was assigned to the entity of the Republika Srpska (RS) governed by Bosnian Serb authorities.

The Contested Legacy of the Srebrenica Genocide

Theoretical Lens

No analysis of the SPMCC can take place without understanding the dynamics of contestation that continue to haunt the legacy of the Srebrenica genocide. More specifically, eighteen years onward, the Srebrenica genocide is still subject to opposing narratives within the collective memories of both the Bosnian Serbs and Bosniak communities about what exactly took place between 11 and 22 July 1995. Was it actually genocide of innocent men and boys or a particularly bloody battle between two armies? From a theoretical vantage point, collective memory features prominently in both groups’ struggles to reconcile the genocide’s notorious halo. The interplay between victims and perpetrators remain clouded due to several conceptual

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14 A partial listing of the crimes in BiH for which Milosević 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.”
frameworks playing out in real time: 1) the role of collective memory and trauma in binding mnemonic communities together; 2) the use of ethnic identity as a mechanism to create separation between “us” and “them”; and 3) the manipulation of collective memory, ethnic identity, and trauma to control the memory of the event itself.

Collective Memory and Trauma

In the aftermath of massive human rights violations, how survivors recover their identities and reconcile their loss is of paramount importance. The past and present merge especially in post-conflict societies, where history remains alive rather than as a receding series of events, building upon Pierre Nora’s assertion that, “The need for memory is a need for history” (Nora 1996: 8). This practice underscores Maurice Halbwachs’ interpretation of how collective memory functions since what the group remembers can become easily distorted to fit the group’s needs (Halbwachs 1992: 183). Moreover, if social and communal groupings heavily influence interpretations of the past based on a variety of factors, then these memories have a subjective quality animating Benedict Anderson’s conception of an “imagined community” (Anderson 2006: 6). Within the context of collective memory rather than collective nationalism, “imagined communities” become “mnemonic communities.” These mnemonic communities are structured around an “individual community’s collective memories,” according to Eviatar Zerubavel, and “includes only those shared by its members as a group” (Zerubavel 2003: 4).

Importantly, an individual group’s collective memory can be based upon shared experiences that incorporate different versions and perspectives of events from group members. This means that multiple groups also have diverse and contradictory interpretations of the same event, especially if it involves an emotional component and/or traumatic memory (Ross 2001:

15 A future draft of this paper will expand upon Halbwach’s theory as it relates to collective memory.
165; Ross 2002: 1). Avishai Margalit recognizes two types of collective memory within social groups: “common memory” and “shared memory”. He defines “common memory” as an experience that a broad range of people have undergone together in some way. “Shared memory” is a collection of individual memories from different vantage points fused into a single narrative (Margalit 2002: 51). Iwona Irwin-Zarecka synthesizes these two concepts into a “community of memory”: one that emotionally binds people together in a profound way through the shared experience of a highly disturbing or harrowing incident, a point shared by Barbara Misztal (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 47; Misztal 2003: 88).

Another aspect of collective memory in war’s aftermath is how survivors and perpetrators attempt to move on with their lives. Violent conflict, mass atrocities, and contested histories often cover up the psychic, physical, and psychological aspects of trauma that may never heal at the individual, collective, and national levels (Edkins 2006: 110; Estrada-Hollenbeck 2001: 71; Herman 1992: 37, 39, 48). The use of victimization and traumatic memory are therefore powerful cards played by all parties in the post-conflict environment. Buried within trauma are victims’ desires to remember and perpetrators’ refusals to acknowledge (Cohen 2001: 245). An opposing strand within the discourse argues that cultural trauma should not be psychologically addressed. The position emphasizes that trauma should be left in its authentic state to preserve the memory itself and, therefore, inhibit its co-optation by the broader culture (Caruth 1996: 7; see also summary by Kansteiner and Weilnböck 2010). 16

**Ethnic Identity**

The memories of one ethnic group can easily polarize, exclude, and ostracize other groups. According to Marc Howard Ross, ethnic identity allows people with a similar background to create a powerful bond with each other using the sensitivities of their “shared past experiences

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16 A future draft of this paper will more fully explore the past/present binary as well as how selectivity impacts collective memory.
and expectations of shared future ones” (Ross 2001: 160). Not all scholars agree with this perspective, though. For example, Michael Ignatieff believes that ethnic associations regularly morph with respect to past memories and political manipulation, referring to them “not [as] a skin, but a mask, constantly repainted” (Ignatieff 1997: 56). In the absence of a tolerant and secure atmosphere to ensure equality and safety for the entire society, competition for special attention can take a virulent, insensitive, and hostile turn towards groups deemed to be the Other (Ignatieff 1997: 7, 52; Robertson and Hall 2007: 34).

When a war involves ethnic animosities pitting one or more groups against each other, the viciousness over who controls the conflict’s historical memory becomes more complicated. According to Helmut Anheier and Yudishthir Raj Isar, contested memory “refers to events or places that, in some way or another, are disputed by one or more party either involved in the event or as outsiders” (Anheier and Isar 2011: 338). To openly refute the history and identity of another group within this ethnic rivalry escalates the tensions between them. It begins to erode their common national identity and their humanity in favor of strained relations and even open conflict (Dragović-Sosa 2010: 32; Hoffman 2002: 280; Misztal 2007: 383). Elizabeth Cole and Judy Barsalou reinforce this idea by stating that the representation of history within an ethnicized climate often results in a muscular negation of each group’s memory of events (Cole and Barsalou 2006: 9).

**Manipulation of Collective Memory, Ethnic Identity, and Trauma**

Memories of the traumatic event can become intertwined with and manipulated through ethnic identities, including between relations with members of different ethnic groups (Robertson and Hall 2007: 20). Manipulated narratives of the past also become invented myths that ethnic groups organize their identity around (Dragović-Sosa 2010: 32). The significance of these powerful myths, often emphasizing victimization, long-held fears about the Other, and further
cultural ambitions, is that they become replacements for the facts (Ross 2001: 166; Ross 2002: 4). This “collective egoism” can easily become antagonistic towards other groups and reduce inter-ethnic accommodation (Margalit 2002: 35). Ross defines these conflicts as “psychocultural dramas.” These dramas “draw upon the uniqueness of each group’s identity, including its historical and ancient origins, using contestations of memory to intentionally elicit concerns from the opposing group who are subsequently forced into the role of the Other” (Ross 2001: 159).

Ignatieff has an even starker view of ethnic war. He comments that, through the use of ethnic cleansing, the aggressive forces can actually erase all traces of the Other’s collective history and identity. Thus, the aggressor uses the “cleansed” area as proof that the victims never existed and to justify the aggressor’s ethnicized mythic history—while the victims are left without any trace of their past (Ignatieff 1997: 177). Whose historical interpretation of events becomes the dominant narrative is a psychological continuation of the conflict. As such, Ross hypothesizes that nothing about the conflict can be easily agreed upon, including the when, why, and how it started or who is to blame (Ross 2001: 162). The histories of ancient and recent violent conflicts have profound implications on the role of memory at the individual, collective, and national levels as well (Edkins 2006: 101). Moreover, aspects of the contested master commemorative narrative reflect manipulated symbols, historical turning points, and political ideology (Ashplant et al., 2000: 22; Wertsch and Billingsley 2011: 27; Zerubavel 1995: 6).

The Bosnian Context

In present day BiH, individual communities in the Podrinje continue to wrestle with how to memorialize what happened, including who died and/or who killed during the war. The history of what happened during the Srebrenica genocide remains hotly contested by both sides and heightens “mistrust of the Other” (Petrisch and Džihić 2010: 20-21; Wagner 2008: 91-92). As the International Crisis Group (ICG) discovered, “While there was little focus on recognition of
genocide immediate after the war, today it is deeply important for many Bosniaks, who feel that when Serbs deny that genocide happened, they are denying that any crimes happened at all” (ICG 2011: 23). This denial including disputes over the numbers of persons killed, the reasons for the violence, and the identities of the dead (civilians or combatants) (DiCaprio 2009: 79; ICTY Bridging the Gap 2005). This is despite the DNA, legal, and factual evidence to the contrary and the factual documentation of what happened in the days, months, and years in the Srebrenica enclave before and during the genocide (DiCaprio 2009: 89; ICTY Case IT-98-33; Wagner 2010A: 71).

Collective Memory and Trauma

One strain of the volatile narrative and counter-narratives that exist between the Bosniaks and Bosnian Serb mnemonic communities are the disputed roles between the genocide’s victims and perpetrators (Simić and Daly 2011: 475; Viejo-Rose 2011: 60; Wagner 2010A: 62; Wagner 2010B: 31). Many, but by no means all, Bosnian Serbs generally believe that all the men and boys killed in the ‘massacre’ at Srebrenica were armed soldiers of the ARBiH and, thus, that the VRS killed them in self-defense and in accordance with traditional rules of war (in which it normal for armed combatants on both sides to be killed). The enormity of forensic evidence unearthed during exhumations of the mass graves clearly indicates that nearly all the men and boys killed were civilians. Ties binding their wrists and bands covering their eyes were frequently found in the graves, sometimes separated from the victims but often attached to their decomposed corpses.

Additionally, a broad discourse surrounding the Srebrenica genocide focuses predominantly upon Bosniak victimhood (Duijzings 2007: 155). In this narrative, Bosnian Serbs are forcibly cast into the role of perpetrators, a label they vigorously deny using their war dead as proof of their own martyrdom and victimhood (ICG 2011: 21). At the opposite end of the
spectrum, Mirsad Tokača calls out this dynamic by questioning the purpose of the 11 July (Bosniak) commemoration: “Is [it] really intended to preserve the [victims’] memory and honor them, or has it turned into a method for establishing the definition of the present and future that the religious/political elites want and using the victims and their families for that purpose?” (Tokača 2000: 223). According to the 2011 ICG report, “Many [Bosniaks] who live outside the RS see it as a territory created through blood, whose existence can only be accepted if [Bosnian] Serbs and their leaders acknowledge wartime crimes” (ICG 2011: 21). The desire of some of Srebrenica’s survivors to focus on victimhood rather than using their experiences to find some type of common ground was echoed in my conversation with Alma Mašić, head of the regional non-governmental organization, Youth Initiative for Human Rights. As she told me,

“[The use of] victimization is a major problem with building a national identity and under a completely wrong basis.”

But as Saliha Džuderija, the then BiH Assistant Minister for Human Rights explained, what exactly defines a victim in post-war BiH? Beyond the umbrella term of genocide survivor, there are also rape survivors, concentration camp inmates, orphans, the disabled, war veterans, and numerous other groups, each of whom require attention to their specific needs and protection of their human rights. I echo Džuderija’s comments because the Bosnian War deeply affected all citizens of BiH, despite their ethnicity. Even though the ICTY continues to prove that the majority of crimes were committed by the VRS in a planned fashion, civilians of all ethnicities

17 Personal interview with Alma Mašić, Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), 7 September 2011. YIHR has produced an interactive educational online program entitled Srebrenica: Mapping Genocide. The Srebrenica: Mapping Genocide interactive tool is not an ethnically-biased or emotional interpretation of the events. The voices used to describe the events are male and female speakers who explain the facts in a calm, clear, and detached manner, even when describing the executions of Bosniak men and boys captured by the VRS. The narrators’ voices have little to no accents and their dialects are intentionally vague so as to minimize the questioning of their particular ethnicities. The video game format was specifically selected to capture the attention of and motivate young people to use it. The tool was launched in both BiH and in Serbia (through one of YIHR’s teams based in Belgrade). The CD was freely distributed to schools as well as in hundreds of local newspapers. The program was also broadcast on Montenegrin television in 2009 and was financed by Civil Rights Defenders, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the US Embassy in BiH. For more information, see Works Cited.

18 Personal interview with Saliha Džuderija, Assistant Minister for Human Rights, BiH, 27 August 2011.
died not just because they were murdered, tortured, or raped, but also from forced displacement, starvation, and criminal militias. The promotion and protection of human rights does not exclude anyone, even those, ironically, who were perpetrators. To continue to separate out victims from perpetrators will inhibit the country from moving forward and its population from significant psychological recovery.

Daniel Bar-Tal focuses on another nuance of this argument by calling attention to the tension between what victims and perpetrators consider to be the “patriots and heroes” and victims of the conflict, further inflaming an “us versus them” mindset (Bar-Tal 2003: 89). In addition, Ignatieff and Misztal both comment that the way groups passionately defend their particular non-linear, historical interpretations and memories reflects upon the ways their collective and national identities enable them to strongly defy alternative versions of the same events (Ignatieff 1997: 175; Misztal 2003: 108). The ICG Report concurs, noting that “Serbs are especially loathe to admit that their worst crimes amount to genocide” (ICG 2011: 21). Here the Bosnian Serb narrative of the war focuses squarely on “equalizing” all deaths to further showcase themselves as victims and the Bosniaks as perpetrators (Duijzings 2007: 162).

**Ethnic Identity**

Of all the legacies bequeathed to BiH was the Ottoman Empire’s organization of the population into the three religious—and not ethnic—groups: Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic (Friedman 2004: 8; McCarthy 1996: 58). Despite the powerful nationalist ideological rhetoric that engulfed the population (indeed much of the European continent) in the years leading up to World War I, the average Bosnian citizen did not live in ethnic-specific enclaves nor outwardly hate their neighbors—even if they merely tolerated them (Donia and Fine 1994: 86). The core

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19 A future draft of this paper will include a more lengthy analysis of the ambiguities between survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders.
fabric of Bosnian life was, in fact, similar for all the country’s inhabitants, despite their socio-economic, religious, ethnic, or “national” groupings (Bringa 1995: 4; Donia and Fine 1994: 7).

The manipulation of Bosnian ethnicity through nationalism only firmly came into existence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was further heightened by an increasingly threatening Serbia (Donia & Fine 1994: 79-80, 82; Friedman 2004: 5 & 121). It is important to remember though, as Marko Attila Hoare points out, “The division of contemporary Bosnians between three nationalities—Muslim, Serb, and Croat—is a by-product of the religious and social changes brought about by the long Ottoman presence, and in no way corresponds to the ethnic divisions of the pre-Ottoman period” (Hoare 2007: 41). Noel Malcolm raises a similar point noting that,

“This animosities were not permanently built into the psyches of the people who lived in Bosnia; they were products of history and could change as history developed. The economic causes of hatred were eroded by changes and reforms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, until they had largely ceased to exist” (Malcolm 1994: xxi).

This is a profound insight since life in BiH, despite the ravages of modernity and Communism, was much the same just before the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. The brutality unleashed during the 1992-1995 Bosnian War cannot simply be justified by BiH’s pre-twentieth century history without also taking into account the ways that the country’s history has been hijacked and corrupted by nationalists and extremists. Even Richard Holbrooke, the American diplomat credited with getting the warring parties to sign the Dayton Agreement, understood this. In his memoir he observed that, “Yugoslavia’s tragedy was not foreordained. It was the product of bad, even criminal, political leaders who encouraged ethnic confrontation for personal, political, and financial gain” (Holbrooke 1999: 23).
One aspect of the ongoing battle over the Srebrenica genocide’s memory is connected to what Gerlachus Duijzings defines as the different historical narratives that Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs grew up with. Duijzings describes this as different lenses of “being in history,” which are rooted the ways in which memories of World War II and Tito’s Yugoslavia were managed and/or ignored (Duijzings 2007: 146). Other scholars also point to the tragedy of Tito’s dual promotion of a single Yugoslav identity while attempting to violently eradicate nationalist agitation using his “police state apparatus” (Zimmermann 1999: 252). Tito’s policies had direct consequences on the evolution of ethno-nationalist regimes in the 1990s that reactivated these supposedly dormant belief systems (Ashplant et al., 2000: 5, 64; Hajdarpašić 2010: 204; Hartman 2010: 309).

Many contemporary Bosniaks characterize themselves as being one of the original peoples to live in the territory now known as BiH, well before the Ottoman Empire’s arrival. Their roots in the land go back as far as the establishment of the Bosnian Church (a Christian church different from the Orthodox and Catholic churches that integrated different aspects of Catholicism and paganism) (Bringa 1995: 15; Donia & Fine 1994: 19). Conversions of Catholic and Orthodox Slavic residents to Islam took place under pressure of the Ottoman authorities and Turkish influence on villages across BiH (Sells 1996: 33-35). Michael Sells notes that, “As Bosnia grew and prospered, Bosnians [of all ethnicities] converted to Islam in a higher proportion than Serbs or other South Slavic groups” (Sells 1996: 35). However, all three groups lived peacefully alongside each other as early as the 1500s.

Before the war, my Bosniak interview subjects recounted being entirely at peace with their neighbors, including the celebration of each other’s holidays, as most residents of BiH had done for centuries. According to Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, without provocation, began brutalizing and ethnically cleansing innocent civilians starting in 1992, culminating in the
Srebrenica genocide. They were, thus, taken by surprise when these same Bosnian Serb neighbors attacked and betrayed them when the war broke out.\textsuperscript{20}

Bosnian Serbs have an entirely different narrative. They pre-emptively defended themselves from Bosniaks intent on committing genocide against them again, just as the Bosniaks had done in partnership with the \textit{Ustaše} during World War II. Tito’s policy of forcibly closing the chapter on ‘the past,’ for example, by making the Jasenovac concentration camp’s mass graves inaccessible, has prevented survivors from locating, identifying, and publically mourning their dead; establishing an accurate number of the deceased; and causing old wounds to remain open indefinitely.\textsuperscript{21} This situation fuels the fire about Bosnian Serbs’ assertions that they too were the victims of genocide (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 71; Lebow 2006: 22). Hence, the ICG’s finding 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).

\textit{Manipulation of Collective Memory, Ethnic Identity, and Trauma}

There was no clear ‘winner’ of the Bosnian War and no ‘loser’ forced to reconcile its past crimes at the national level, as was the case with post-World War II Germany. As a result, subjective, circumstantial, familial, nationalized, traumatic, and ethnicized memories are promulgated within the polarized Bosniak and Bosnian Serb communities and transmitted to

\textsuperscript{20} This point was reiterated by the majority of survivors from small villages and hamlets that comprised the group of people I conducted interviews. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the survivors I interviewed that lived in Sarajevo and other more urbanized areas before the war were aware of the growing tensions within the country prior to the outbreak of war.

\textsuperscript{21} My visit to Jasenovac, the largest World War II Holocaust concentration and extermination camp in Croatia, was revealing. With the support of the Nazis, the Croatian \textit{Ustaše} primarily administered the camp and large numbers of Serbs (from the region) were massacred there, in addition to Jews and the Roma. The site is split between the towns of Jasenovac, Croatia and Staro Gradiska, in the RS part of BiH. In Jasenovac there is the Jasenovac Memorial Site (Camp III), which includes a modern museum (built with the support of Yad Vashem in Israel) as well as a massive concrete monument in the shape of a flower surrounded by small mounds and depressions in the earth to show where the camp’s buildings were located. The Staro Gradiska site (Camp V) 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 numbers of the dead remain hotly contested between Serbs and Croats to this day as conference proceedings from three conferences in 1997, 2000, and 2003 illuminate.
their children (Ashplant et al., 2000: 18, 51; Hartman 2010: 30; Tokača 2010: 226; Wollaston 1996: 1-2). As Džuderija explained during our discussion about the German government and populace’s reconciliation of their roles as perpetrators in the Holocaust,

“Here [in BiH] we encounter inefficiency of punishment, light punishments, and no process of vetting and lustration to erase and eliminate people who had such intentions in mind. You know that in Germany and some other countries who dealt with it [World War II] more seriously, such a person could not be a teacher, politician, or public person, just to prevent him or her from projecting it [these ideas] to the public. But here, such people [perpetrators] are still in schools and public institutions, and that is something that frightens a person. It frightens me.”

In BiH, the Bosnian War’s history has been constructed into three ethno-centric narratives: Bosniak, Bosnian Serb, and Bosnian Croat. Each of these narratives focuses on the atrocities committed against its own ethnic group while demonizing the other ethnic groups as the perpetrators. Ignatieff asserts that, “While an agreement on a shared chronology of events might be possible…it is impossible to imagine the three sides ever agreeing on how to apportion responsibility. The truth that matters to people is not factual or narrative truth but the moral or interpretive truth” (Ignatieff 1997: 175).

The inheritance of trauma across multiple generations extends to the community’s collective memory that can stunt the very foundation and social fabric of a post-conflict society, including its regeneration, recovery, rebuilding, and reconciliation (Edkins 2006: 109; Herman 1992: 48; Misztal 2003: 1, 22; Suárez-Orozco and Robben 2000: 51). Bosnian citizens are heavily distressed and struggle with whether they want—or are willing—to deal with the demons

22 Personal interview with Saliha Džuderija, Assistant Minister for Human Rights, BiH, 27 August 2011.
23 For the purposes of this paper I focus strictly on interactions between Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs in connection to the Srebrenica genocide, the two groups directly involved and implicated, respectively.
of the past. Ethno-centric narratives are deeply embedded in the fabric of society and the atrocities of World War II still loom large.

Section Summary
The Srebrenica genocide’s memory remains an obvious trigger point of contestation between the Bosnian Serb and Bosniak mnemonic communities. These two communities, sadly, are defined by ethnic lines in terms of who are considered victims (Bosniaks) and who are considered perpetrators (Bosnian Serbs). One the one hand, Bosniaks were the overwhelming majority of persons targeted for the genocidal killings—a legal fact proven by the ICTY. On the other hand, Bosnian Serbs vigorously contest the “perpetrator” label, arguing that the massacres were not genocidal and that their own civilian deaths have been ignored by the international community. While the Srebrenica opština is generally safe and relations between both ethnicities respectful, the exception being tiny villages inhabited by virulent Bosnian Serb nationalists, one need only scratch the surface to see just how much the genocide’s memory continues to haunt both populations. These heated interpretations of the Srebrenica genocide all point to the vital intersection of the SPMCC in memorializing the past, in symbolizing the decision to erect it in the village of Potočari, itself awarded to the RS, and in promoting a culture of human rights and democracy.

The SPMCC and Transitional Justice

Theoretical Lens
The intersection of sites of atrocity and transitional justice mechanisms are crucial in understanding how contested memories continue to haunt divided societies in the aftermath of war. While legal proceedings seek to impart the rule of law on perpetrators and provide judicial

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25 Personal interview with Matthew Holliday, ICMP, 25 August 2011.
26 Hatidža Mehmedović of the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ (based in Srebrenica) reminded me, though, that the SPMCC does not ensure protection for Bosniak returnees, especially given the vast land area, including rural villages, which comprises the Srebrenica opština. Bosniaks who have returned to the area still experience intimidation from local Bosnian Serbs—including ethno-nationalist provocations and graffiti written on buildings where Bosniak men and boys were murdered—that appeared just a few days prior to our interview. Personal interview with Hatidža Mehmedović, ‘Mothers of Srebrenica,’ 11 August 2011.
closure for victims, these efforts often take place—literally and symbolically—far away from the communities and landscapes where the crimes were committed. Especially when the victims and perpetrators live side by side, traumatic memories of the atrocities impact the community’s ability to reconcile the past, much less find common ground to heal and move forward. Sites of atrocity become the front lines of these reconciliation battles especially when victims and perpetrators continue to live in politicized environments that promote separation, denial, and/or conflict. The contested memories between polarized mnemonic communities reveal sites of atrocities’ significance as 1) tangible memorialization initiatives; 2) symbolic locations of suffering, horror, and truth; and 3) potential Sites of Conscience (SoC).

**Memorialization**

Transitional justice mechanisms may offer victims a cathartic release of trauma and revulsion. Although there are myriad ways post-conflict societies wrestle with the past, memorialization continues to be treated within the reparations pillar of transitional justice (Bickford and Sodaro 2010: 2; Naidu 2012). Nonetheless, Martha Minow underscores that forms of memorials, truth commissions, and criminal prosecutions, amongst others, can support the socio-cultural and political recovery in post-conflict societies, especially in what to remember and what to forget in order to rebuild (Minow 1998: 19, 119, 147).

Bottom-up approaches to transitional justice are essential since the process can take a long time to accomplish, requiring a concerted effort by politicians and civil society actors (Weinstein et al., 2010: 33). The battle over the ‘truth’ takes center stage because there are many conflicting versions of the past. In war’s aftermath, 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 (Hayner 2010: 189; Minow 1998: 119). Here, the need to memorialize a difficult past as well as counteract the
vicious denial it elicits is a critical component of transitional justice and memorialization at the macro and micro levels (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 13).

Beyond the pro-democratic efforts to bring the rule of law and justice to post-conflict societies, memorialization allows survivors to have a voice in rebuilding their society (Shaw and Waldorf 2010: 7). While the horror’s acknowledgement is a form of symbolic justice for survivors and victims, it is equally disturbing for the perpetrators. Thus, the battle over what is memorialized may continue for generations (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996: 129). Additionally, because so much of the debate is negotiated at the local level, what shall be remembered and what shall be forgotten must be negotiated there since it is the community itself that must find a way to achieve civil relations. Outside actors with memorialization expertise must, therefore, be respectful of the community’s needs, regardless of the outcome (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 18).

One of the most powerful memorialization tools is the conversion of sites of atrocity into memorials because of their inherent power in connecting the past, present, and future. These memorials protect the past by marking the spot where the atrocities took place; commenting on the present by reminding aggrieved communities of the past conflict; and ensuring that future generations remain aware of what transpired years, and sometimes generations, before (Brett et al., 2007: 30; Moore 2009: 49). As such, memorials established at sites of atrocity can act as part of multi-faceted reconciliation and transitional justice programs in an effort to establish a democratic, albeit contested, discourse between victims and perpetrators (Brett et al., 2007: 22 and 31; Crooke 2007: 301; Turnbridge & Ashworth 1996: 129).

Sites of atrocity are more than place markers of past horrors; they represent a tangible and localized symbol of reparations. As Priscilla Hayner explains, “In many contexts symbolic measures, such as official apologies or the construction of memorials, offer an important sense of acknowledgement of wrongs” (Hayner 2011: 10; see also Brett et al., 2007: 6). Inherent in efforts
to create memorials at sites of atrocity is the process that the community itself—or in tandem with international actors—decide how and what to design. This process means that the communities where the memorials exist are forced to confront the past and determine the legacies they want to communicate (ICMP Conference 2010: 2).

Fostering tolerance and understanding between polarized communities of victims and perpetrators is no easy task. For the victims, as Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter assert, “Memorialization is a process that satisfies the desire to honor those who suffered or died during conflict as a means to examine the past and address contemporary issues” (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 1). However, for perpetrators, the memorialization process is inherently fraught as a memorial erected at site of atrocity forces them to confront very painful realities about their individual and collective responsibility, guilt, and/or denial. This point is especially salient when the memorial’s narrative focuses exclusively on the victims’ experiences (Brett et al., 2007: 9). Nonetheless, as Lisa Moore points out, “The process of constructing a memorial, if inclusive, can facilitate a necessary dialogue that can help to mend entrenched social antagonisms and heal painful wounds” (Moore 2009: 57).

Symbolism

Memorial sites and sites of atrocity are places where human rights violations or mass violence occurred. They are powerful settings not just because of their location but also because they situate visitors that much closer to the victims and environment in which the atrocities took place. These sites can include locations of mass graves, brothels and rape camps, concentration camps, detention centers, bone pits, and cemeteries (Williams 2007: 81). Because a long period of time has elapsed since the killings occurred and the present day, these properties may be in various states of decay, or may even be converted into buildings for political or other purposes, such as community centers, hotels, restaurants, and schools. Obscured within their history and
symbolism is the forensic proof that sites of atrocity embody—not only as architectural crime scenes etched in the landscape, but also as physical reminders of the human remains discovered posthumously. For Louis Bickford and Amy Sodaro, the nature of these memorials stem from the need for societies “throughout human history” to have a place to bury, commemorate, and bemoan their dead (Bickford and Sodaro 2010: 76).

The distortions of ethnic narratives and myths often play out at the very sites where the mass atrocities took place. The sites of these difficult pasts can easily become a frontline of aggression (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 17; Brett et al., 2007: 23; Crooke 2007: 301; Hajdarpašić 2010: 202; Ray 2006: 42; Ševčenko 2011: 120; Viejo-Rose 2011: 58). This dynamic is further ignited though memorial sites that must traverse the painful juncture of perpetrators having to come to terms with their crimes, be it through active denial, forgetting, or counter-narratives, and the opposing calls for justice, accountability, and remembrance for which victims agitate (Moore 2009: 50). J.E. Turnbridge and G.J. Ashworth argue that the inclusion of perpetrators’ actions at the site can actually galvanize their own hostile counter-narrative to deflect blame. They note that memorial sites’ inclusion of these stories can take two forms, each of which is problematic in its own right. Here, either the memorial site defines the perpetrators extremely broadly—“if everyone is guilty then no one can be blamed”—or the site’s narrative narrows down the group of perpetrators to a “specific group separate from society as a whole who can be then demonized as solely guilty” (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996: 109-110).

Another troubling aspect of contested memorial sites are their often singularly focus on a particular group of victim as “martyrs,” according to Barsalou and Baxter (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 7). Consciously or otherwise, as Liz Ševčenko argues, memorial sites focused on a single group of victims can easily acerbate long-running conflicts, thereby throwing more “fuel on the fire,” instead of offering societal contemplation of the past in order to prevent the same collective
violence from reoccurring in the future (Ševčenko 2011: 119-120). However, the carving out of safe spaces for victims to remember becomes complicated within highly fractured and ethnically divided communities (Brett et al., 2007: 9). Jay Winter comments that memories manipulated and/or championed by one ethnic group often include narratives that emphasize its collective suffering and traumatic pasts to rally around (Winter 2006: 65). Moore makes a similar argument by noting that, “Memorials can also provide a place of sanctuary for mourning or they can become targets of future aggression due to their symbolic resonance” (Moore 2007: 48).

If the international community emphasizes the role of bringing war criminals to justice while individual communities stress the need for victims’ voices to be heard, the memorialization discourse includes commentary about these sites of atrocities’ historic, symbolic, forensic, and educational significance. Nora fashioned the term “lieux de mémoire” as the difference between a nation’s historical consciousness (“millieux de mémoire”) and “objects [that] are part of everyday experience: cemeteries, museums, [and] commemorations” (Nora 1996: 1, 6, 18). In post-conflict countries where history is contested, these lieux de mémoire take on a new significance: they act as locations for grieving, for remembrance, for closure, for historical memory, for documentation, for artistry, for reinterpretation, for communal dialogue, for collective identity, for debate, for reconciliation, for healing, for education, and sadly, for political manipulation (Carrier 2005: 23; Edkins 2006: 176; Kritzman 1996: Preface; Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996: 118, 128).

Sites of Conscience (SoC)
As the fields of memorialization and human rights expand, a new type of memorial paradigm has emerged. The SoC movement, led by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC),\(^{27}\) brings together memorial sites around the world to promote the use of

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these locations for both the remembrance of past horrors and the present-day promotion of human rights and democratic engagement amongst civilian populations (Brett et al., 2007: 1). Ševčenko defines SoC as locations that, “Interpret history through historic sites; engage in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues and promote humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function; and share opportunities for public involvement in issues raised at the site” (Ševčenko 2006: 157).

Both Ševčenko and Liam Mahony highlight the powerful platform by which SoC can advocate for contemporary human rights promotion, especially when present-day societies are experiencing a rise in socio-political racism, xenophobia, and exclusion (Ševčenko and Mahony 2004: 6). Concomitantly, Ševčenko stresses that, “SoC operate at the intersection of historic preservation, human rights, citizen engagement, education, and the arts” (Ševčenko 2011: 114). The link between SoC and the global human rights normative framework is, hence, interconnected. This makes the SoC movement all the more powerful, prescient, and pressing because, as Isabel Wollaston poignantly questions, “What is never to happen again, and to whom should it never happen again?” (Wollaston 1996: 9).

All of the ICSC’s sites are committed to connecting the past to the present by helping their respective societies not only come to terms with their violent histories. They are also leveraging the past as a conduit to help visitors and students understand why these events happened so as to build a future culture of tolerance, human rights, and equality rooted in democratic principles. As Moore concludes, sites of atrocity play a dual role: they educate about the blasphemous while testifying to the sacrosanct (Moore 2009: 51). Moreover, all aspects of these sites must reflect their commitment to human rights values through their installations, exhibitions, educational outreach programs, and broader strategic aims (Brett et al., 2007: 27).
The Bosnian Context
Memorialization is still in its infancy in BiH (Popović 2009). It is impossible to travel throughout the country without noticing how much death, devastation, denial, and destruction the war wrought upon this tiny nation. Regardless of ethnicity, the war has exacted a painful toll upon the population and memories of the conflict remain palpably raw and divisive. If the war about the Srebrenica genocide is still ongoing between the two opposed mnemonic communities of victims and perpetrators, this conflict is constantly inflamed at the site of atrocity itself—the SPMCC. Between the ethnically mixed town of Srebrenica (albeit where Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks live in different areas) and the Bosnian Serb-dominant town of Bratunac, lies Potočari. Potočari is a former manufacturing village, just nine kilometers away from Bratunac on the same highway, where the former Battery Factory is located. With a single road connecting all three locales, the SPMCC’s existence dominates the landscape replete with thousands of tombstones stretching across the hillside—for the SPMCC is cemetery as much as it is a SoC. Here, the SPMCC represents an outside-imposed memorialization mechanism that is steeped in symbolism based upon the blood spilled on its location.

The Eleventh of July
The most significant and high profile event takes place each 11 July to commemorate the day in which the Srebrenica enclave was overrun by the VRS and the killings began. Every 11 July the world remembers Srebrenica and the international community pays its respects and offers apologies for not doing enough to prevent the genocide. Rituals of this kind offer victims the chance to heal and come together around a new form of identity: survivorship, according to Lisa Schirch (2001: 155). Moreover, the 11 July commemoration, as Chris Keil points out, is based upon the symbiotic relationship between honoring the departed and recalling the troubled past (2005: 481). The commemoration is attended by 30-45,000 people, including survivors,
émigrés, politicians, diplomats, journalists, scholars, and photographers. For Hatidža Mehmedović, of the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ (based in Srebrenica), the crowds are welcome:

“You know what, everybody who comes here to Memorial Center [the SPMCC], it is significant for us. They come to bow to the victims of the genocide and give support to us survivors, so we can see that we are not alone and that our beloved ones will not remain alone.”

Olivera Simić postulates that the commemoration is not strictly about owning the dead (2009: 297). It is about recollection and possession of memories related to the “present and the future,” of which the Mothers remain at the center (Simić 2009: 297). For example, Hajra Ćatić, of the ‘Women of Srebrenica’ (based in Tuzla), said although seventeen years have passed, her association’s mission has not changed since many family members have still not located the remains of their beloved. Ćatić is also, “Losing hope that I will find the remains of my child.” For Nura Begović, of the “Women of Srebrenica” (based in Tuzla), the 11 July commemoration is both traumatic and healing:

“When someone finds out that somebody from their family was found, you feel in that moment like it just happened, I mean the war [that] finished in 1995. But with the time, when you bury him, and when you know where is the place where you buried him, and when you can go to do a religious ceremony [in the SPMCC], you somehow feel a bit calmer.”

Upon conclusion of the prayer service, the coffins are lined up in what feels like an endless and terrifying number of rows. The coffins are made of wood with a thin green cloth as a cover. The plastic bags of bones contained inside are easily seen. These are, after all, pieces of mortal remains—and not intact skeletons—of the dead. Family members of the deceased hover

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28 Each year representatives from the Serbian NGO, Women in Black, come to the commemoration. These women are actively involved in helping Serbian citizens understand the true nature of the genocide as well as the complicity of the Serbian government. Women in Black’s attendance at the 11 July commemoration, however, remains muted and the women maintain a low profile (Simić and Daly 2011). In 2010 a colleague introduced me to two of them.

29 Personal interview with Hatidža Mehmedović, ‘Mothers of Srebrenica,’ 11 August 2011.

30 There are three groups of Srebrenica Mothers associations: 1) The ‘Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa’ (based in Sarajevo) led by Munira Subašić; the ‘Women of Srebrenica’ (based in Tuzla) led by Hajra Ćatić and Nura Begović; and the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ (based in Srebrenica) led by Hatidža Mehmedović.

and cry over the coffins. The coffins are then moved by the men in a similar procession into the pre-dug plots where each coffin will be buried. This symbolic ritual allows the family members to bury their dead in a dignified and respectful way, especially since these mortal remains were initially buried in primary graves and subsequently transferred to secondary mass graves across the Podrinje’s opštine by the VRS (Pollack 2003B: 135). To honor the genocide victims in this manner enables the surviving family members the chance for what Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan describe as “public recollection…the act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public” (1999: 6). Munira Subašić, of the ‘Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa’ (based in Sarajevo), said that the commemoration and thousands of white tombstones in the cemetery,

“Tell it to all, and course us mothers, [that] we will not allow that people forget this. And those who committed [these] killings should come to see their dead. Because us mothers, we did not give birth to children without heads and arms, but we bury them like that now.”

Memorialization

There is not a single town or city I have visited where there are not multiple cemeteries, monuments, and plaques dedicated to those killed during the Bosnian War. What stands out about these local memorials, and indeed many plaques, is the way they commemorate the dead and missing. The emphasis is clearly based on each ethnic group’s narrative of how the persons were killed and by whom. Stated simply, the memorials emphasize the victimhood of each ethnicity reinforcing that ‘they did this to us,’ fortifying the seeds for future malcontent, conflict, and revenge (Tokača 2000: 226).

32 Personal interview with Munira Subašić, “Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa,” 5 September 2011.
33 Brčko is the only Bosnian city to be overseen by the Office of the High Representative (OHR) due to the highly contested nature of its location. Hailed as a model post-conflict city where all three ethnic groups live peacefully, there are, nonetheless, three separate monuments—one for each ethnicity’s war dead and/or missing—within mere feet of each another. A full analysis of how the war played out here as well as how it was, and now, is governed is outside the scope of this paper.
The SPMCC is the sole memorial in the country to have been created in partnership with the international community and surviving families. Because the SPMCC’s mandate is squarely focused on memorializing the victims of the July 1995 genocide, it is difficult for a visitor or local person to get a broader picture of what happened in the Srebrenica opština between 1992 and 1995 including the battles waged against Bosnian Serb civilians by the ARBiH. Without this context, the focus of the Bosnian Serbs’ denial of the genocide emphasize lower numbers of Bosniaks killed, insisting that they were armed combatants (despite legal and forensic evidence to the contrary). To avoid these memory disputes, the SPMCC avoids blaming Bosnian Serbs; only the plight of the Srebrenica enclave’s fleeing refugees and subsequent executions beginning on 11 July are described. However, it is clear that the VRS was responsible, especially upon seeing the footage in Srebrenica, July 1995 documentary shown in the Spomen Soba (the Memorial Room located inside the Battery Factory).  

Memorial sites and sites of atrocity around the world, including the SPMCC, are locations where post-conflict countries confront the harshest realities of war and tyranny. These symbolic and highly charged locations thereby become a tool of memorialization to both confront past animosities and the reasons for the warfare that erupted in the first place (Hamber 2010: 397). Essential is the inter-linkage between memorials and other transitional justice endeavors undertaken by all actors involved to support rather than destabilize each other (Brett et al., 2007: 3; ICMP Conference 2010: 2).

However, if all the undertaken transitional justice mechanisms are to be effective in a post-conflict society, then coordination between them is a fundamental component for achieving even modest success. The trouble in BiH is that one ethnic group (the Bosniaks) remain

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34 The Spomen Soba footage is culled from the BBC documentary, Srebrenica: A Cry from the Grave. For more information, see Works Cited.
ensconced in victimhood. This victimhood is exacerbated by the Bosnian Serbs’ belief that they (Bosnian Serbs) won the war while remaining steadfast in erecting memorials to their own dead—and in opposition to memorials honoring Bosniaks (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 8-9). As Hatidža Mehmedović (of the ‘Mothers of Srebrenica’ based in Srebrenica) illuminated:

“The only thing that is missing is that the [RS] entity that is made out of blood and genocide does not come here although they [Bosnian Serbs] know better what has happened here than us families. They do not come, do not care, and do not want to realize what they did. They still negate. And if it remains like this, we can fear worse genocide because they have motivation and they make themselves ways for new genocides because they get motivations from politics [and] courts. And when the war criminals are awarded with freedom in the entity founded on blood and genocide—this gives the motivation to the youth that they can do bloodier and more dangerous genocides.”

The lack of synchronization between the Bosniak and Bosnian Serb mnemonic communities in clearing the past, thus, remains highly fraught and contentious (Wagner 2010B: 31). This point is elaborated upon by Dragan Popović,

“Memorials which have already been erected or are being erected at the moment in BiH are built in a non-selected manner and there is a lack of a coordinated approach to this matter at the state level. They are almost completely built along ethnic lines with a small number of examples of supranational monument or monuments erected upon initiatives launched by two peoples. There is a tendency of building monuments without establishing detailed facts about what has really happened at a certain location or in a certain region. In addition, there is not a single monument in BiH devoted to victims in a universal manner. Erection of monuments in BiH is a political matter and they largely carry a message about who was the victim and who the perpetrator; who was the aggressor and who was the defender” (Popović/UNDP 2009: 45-46; see also ICMP Conference 2010: 8)

*Symbolism*

This particular parcel of land in Potočari, Žitno Polje, is highly symbolic: it is the exact place where the women last saw their male relatives alive. It is also the site where many of the women saw their men murdered and/or the men’s personal belongings thrown into a heap and

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35 Personal interview with Hatidža Mehmedović, ‘Mothers of Srebrenica,’ 11 August 2011.
subsequently burned. In the war’s aftermath and upon the horrifying realization that their male relatives were dead, the Mothers became insistent on finding out the truth. As the mass graves were exhumed and the bodies and/or bones identified, the Mothers wanted these mortal remains to receive a dignified burial in keeping with their religious tradition. Moreover, the Mothers did not want the cemetery to be located in the Federation of Bosnia i Herzegovina (FBiH) where many of Srebrenica’s survivors now reside.

Intimately involved with the Mothers’ efforts, Hasan Nuhanović explained that some of the locations rejected were in the salt tunnels under Tuzla (where the exhumed bodies and bones were originally stored), in Sarajevo, and elsewhere in the FBiH, such as Kladanj, until the international community could sort out how to handle the DNA identifications. It was through the Mothers’ persistent lobbying that led to the cemetery’s ultimate location in Potočari, even though this area was awarded to the RS in the Dayton Agreement. Srebrenica’s survivors believed that the SPMCC had one overarching purpose: “That it became a place of pilgrimage, a sacred location,” according to Nuhanović.

One of the positive consequences of Mothers’ efforts was the SPMCC became a reason for Srebrenica’s Bosniaks to return back to their pre-war land. This symbolic practice of return was their way of reversing ownership of the land from which they were ethnically cleansed (Duijzings 2007: 153; Pollack 2003: 198; Toal and Dahlman 2011: 10; Wagner 2010A: 65). Craig Pollack links the voluntary return of Srebrenica’s expelled Bosniaks to a mythologized connection between their heritage and land, believing that the land had always been Bosniak and should now be reclaimed as such (Pollack 2003: 196; Pollack 2003B: 800).

36 Several of my interviewees from Srebrenica were first hand witnesses to the forced separations of families. They themselves were small children or young adults (luckily quite ill looking and thus able to sneak onto the buses).
39 Personal interview with Hasan Nuhanović, SPMCC, 22 August 2011.
40 Personal interview with Hasan Nuhanović, SPMCC, 22 August 2011.
Both Olivera Simić and Pollack agree that the ties between the living, the dead, and the homeland (whether mythologized or real) play a big part in why Srebrenica’s survivors wanted to bury their dead at Potočari and eventually return home. This is despite the overwhelming hurdles they needed to overcome (Simić 2009: 294-295; Pollack 2003: 193).\footnote{Hatidža Mehmedović reminded me, though, that the SPMCC does not ensure protection for Bosniak returnees, especially given the vast land area, including rural villages, which comprises the Srebrenica opština. Bosniaks who have returned to the area still experience intimidation from local Bosnian Serbs— including ethno-nationalist provocations and graffiti written on buildings where Bosniak men and boys were murdered—that appeared just a few days prior to our interview. Personal interview with Hatidža Mehmedović, ‘Mothers of Srebrenica,’ 11 August 2011.} Pollack and Simić also note that the return of the living to their original lands is deeply connected to their ability to bury their dead close to them (Pollack 2003: 196; Simić 2009).\footnote{A full analysis of the relationship between Bosniak refugee returns to Srebrenica, as it relates to Annex 7 of the Dayton Agreement and the direct links to the burials in Potočari is outside the scope of this paper.} Muhamed Duraković,\footnote{Mr. Duraković’s successful escape into the mountains lasted approximately 40 harrowing days. During that time, subject to constant sniper fire and enemy capture, he had little to no access to food or protection from the elements. After his emigration to the United States where he studied at Drexel University in Virginia, he returned to Srebrenica to support the community’s reconstruction. The Summer University Srebrenica program (that I attended from 2010-2012) is his brainchild; see http://sus.potocarimc.ba. He resides in Srebrenica with his wife and two young children.} the then Chief of Staff for the National Minister of Security for BiH and himself a Srebrenica genocide survivor, also believes that the SPMCC is a symbolic site where some form of justice has been accomplished. He said each time he visits the SPMCC,

> “I go around and I visit the headstones of these people and I reconnect with them in some way. And I think it is really important and it is a normal human need that needs to be fulfilled, and this is why the SPMCC is important for me.” \footnote{Personal interview with Muhamed Duraković, Chief of Staff, Minister of Security, BiH, 24 August 2011.}

The SPMCC is open to visitors of all religious backgrounds. The Foundation of the SPMCC’s \textit{(Foundation)} bylaws do not include a single reference to “ethnicity or nationality at all” perhaps to minimize its controversial existence (Bickford and Sodaro 2010: 75; see also OHR Decision 2001). Nonetheless, the design of the cemetery does indeed showcase that the SPMCC is first and foremost a Muslim memorial (Wagner 2010A: 69). Simić notes that the SPMCC’s ethnic polarization stems from the \textit{Foundation} and the OHR’s “Decision Enacting the
Law on the Center for the SPMCC” (*Law*), including the allocation of the property for the memorial site (OHR Decision 2007). Simić asserts that because Srebrenica is in the RS, the *Law* that governs the SPMCC awards the property to the State of BiH, simultaneously creating distance, ignorance, and denial by local Bosnian Serbs (Simić 2009: 298-299).

Having spent six months in Srebrenica’s environs, I do understand Simić’s assertion that the tension between Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks is palpable but do not entirely agree. Locating the SPMCC in the FBiH would only cause even further disinterest by Bosnian Serbs who continue to deny the genocide. The SPMCC does not allow Bosnian Serbs to forget the events of July 1995. Instead, the SPMCC’s location in Potočari forces them to confront the past, as loathsome and offensive as may they find it. It offers a regular, and for some even daily, reminder that the past is very much alive and must be reconciled somehow—be it through future ethnic hostilities or in a more constructive nonviolent manner.

Wollaston focuses on another aspect of the power that memorial sites possess. She comments that creation of a memorial site, including preservation of its “material remains,” works as powerful method for the aggrieved community to “etch” its memory into the landscape (Wollaston 1996: 37). In the case of the SPMCC, its significance as a physical site of atrocity, as well as a symbolic location for survivors to find closure, strengthens the SPMCC’s purpose for current and future generations (Pollack 2003: 196; Pollack 2003B: 800). Indeed, Nura Begović (of the ‘Women of Srebrenica’ based in Tuzla) reiterated this perspective:

> “The fight [for the SPMCC] lasted for years, and now the question comes to its existence, the importance it has, will there be reconciliation, will there be more return of [Bosniak] people. But what I want to say is that the Memorial Center [the SPMCC] is a part of BiH, the place, we fought for it to be on the state level. To have our rights. So that tomorrow somebody cannot come and claim it. People have to communicate no matter what because of the national structure [the SPMCC being on State (BiH) and not RS land]”

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45 Personal interview with Nura Begović, ‘Women of Srebrenica,’ 18 August 2011.
Site of Conscience (SoC)

There are a great many hurdles for the Srebrenica community and the SPMCC to overcome. These include competing ethno-nationalist narratives of the war; ongoing denial of the Srebrenica genocide; and the ongoing strained relations that exist in the opština between Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs. Nevertheless, the SPMCC is a watershed for Srebrenica, BiH, and the world. The SPMCC’s distinctiveness is derived from the synthesis of the cemetery, Battery Factory, and Spomen Soba. The SPMCC combines commemoration with historical memory rooted in substantial facts. It is a site of atrocity, a site for interring, a site for visiting, a site for mourning, a site for remembering, a site for reflecting, and a site for teaching.

With support from an international community weighed down by its guilty conscience, Srebrenica’s survivors fought and secured Potočari. They struggled to prove that their loved ones existed, to ensure they would never be forgotten, and to create a place where memory of the genocide would be evoked for generations to come. These themes were all present in my conversation with Advija Ibrahimović, a volunteer with the ‘Women of Srebrenica’, who strongly believes in both the SPMCC’s meaning and potential:

“I do want to be a part of Srebrenica and I do want to somehow make people learn more about Srebrenica and about genocide because of everything that happened. And it kind of helps me because we lost our hopes in 1995 and now we are living for a day to identify and find our beloved ones. We still have hope, you know. And then we are fighting for it to give peace to my father and my family and the other families so that they can find peace for their souls. And I want to make people learn about genocide and I want to talk about because it could help that somewhere [else] in the world we can prevent [another] genocide like this.”

For these reasons, the SPMCC stretches the boundaries of traditional memorial museums. It is a public memorial which painfully yet symbolically connects its violent past to its tentative present. The site possesses the metaphoric power of space and place given its history not only to

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46 Personal interview with Advija Ibrahimović, ‘Women of Srebrenica,’ 18 August 2011. Advija was just eleven years old when she lost her father at Potočari during the deportations. He was buried at the SPMCC during the 2012 commemoration.
honor the memory of those murdered in the genocide but also as a public space to foster mutual empathy, if not now, then certainly in the future. Peter Carrier builds upon this premise by noting that memorial sites within the public realm become the “very language with which these societies transmit and negotiate their pasts” (Carrier 2005: 173).

As a SoC in its early stages, the integration of a human rights-based platform in the SPMCC’s future programming is, therefore, essential and especially relevant to survivors. According to Ševčenko, “SoC can offer spaces in which people can model, or perform, the kind of behavior or interaction among people that would sustain a culture of human rights in their context” (Ševčenko 2011: 120). Both Munira Subašić (of the ‘Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa’ based in Sarajevo) and Ibrahimović expressed similar sentiments:

*Munira Subašić*: “I hope that if I do not live to see justice and a better tomorrow, I hope that my granddaughters will live to see it. We all have to do something for a better tomorrow. Everybody has the right to say where he belongs. Because [even] if I feel different from you, I do not have the right to humiliate you, disrespect what is yours.”

*Advija Ibrahimović*: “When they see all those bodies and all this pain on the faces of mothers, people should think how to do something to prevent and how to share that story and how to be involved starting from themselves.”

Subašić and Ibrahimović underscore J. Haessly’s remarks that these “means” justify a larger “end.” He comments that, “Relationships between and among people will be just and peaceful to the extent that human rights are honored” (Haessly 2010: 8).

Despite the significant hurdles it faces, the SPMCC will evolve in the next few decades as survivors become older and new generations of young people step into positions of leadership. The generational cycle will hopefully support the SPMCC’s expansion of its narrative beyond

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47 Personal interview with Munira Subašić, ‘Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa,’ 5 September 2011.
the genocide to include the complete story of the Srebrenica enclave’s siege from 1992-1995. Additionally, it may create an opportunity for the SPMCC to become a location for BiH’s three ethnic groups to come together, talk about painful issues, and solve contemporary politico-economic problems affecting them all. And that is ultimately what the SPMCC as a SoC is about—connecting the dots between the past and present. The message of the SPMCC for Srebrenica’s residents, Bosnian citizens, and global civil society is this: in the aftermath of mass atrocities and genocide, true recovery and healing occur not by “forgiving and forgetting, but by remembering and changing.”

Section Summary
The distances between Bratunac, Srebrenica, and Potočari, with tiny hamlets interspersed between them, show just how fractured relations remain when it comes to the intersection of the war’s memories and each mnemonic community’s own ethnically-rooted narratives (Leydesdorff 2010: 133). In addition, the silence surrounding the SPMCC permeates the atmosphere year round, with the exception of 11 July, making it somewhat easy to forget just how controversial the SPMCC actually is. However, immediately outside the cemetery’s property line, are visible reminders. In 2010, a local Bosniak put up a large banner reading “Serbia is Responsible for the Genocide/Srbija Je Odgovorna Za Genocid” and a separate one referring to Serbia’s aggression against BiH (both were gone in 2012). In addition, as of the summer of 2012, a Bosnian Serb was rallying to build a Serbian Orthodox church in the mountainous field immediately overlooking the cemetery—and directly next to a former Bosniak mass grave. For Duraković,

49 A future draft of this paper will include a lengthy discussion about the future of the annual July commemorations when newly identified remains, Srebrenica’s victims, are laid to rest. This is directly related to the fact that, as the years go on, there will be fewer and fewer victims to bury. Many of these remaining victims cannot be fully identified due to the lack of forensic material (e.g., the majority of the bones have been exhumed from mass graves and confirmed through DNA analysis) and the victim is still considered missing. This is due, in part, to the vast areas of BiH that still contain active landmines, thereby making it difficult to locate these mass graves. The situation is made more complicated due to both the lack of international funding to support de-mining missions as well as the chance that the bones may have moved due to the heavy flooding that occurred across the country a few months ago.

these banners and churches, which are designed to antagonize the Bosniak community, also feed hatred.51

Beyond the SPMCC’s relationship to other communities wrestling with their own memorialization efforts, is the enormity of BiH’s difficulty in coming to terms with its past that is deeply intertwined with the war’s traumatic legacy. As Wollaston notes, the SPMCC, like other memorial sites, is a physical marker to contest atrocities that may be denied or contested and to venerate the dead by “forcing [the wider community] to bear witness so that a trace of what took place remains” (Wollaston 1996: 37). Beyond the hatred is also the continuation of the war, according to Dacia Viejo-Rose who remarks that, “The memorial-scape of BiH reveals another way in which memorials can act in more ways than as mere mnemonic devices in the landscape and how they can keep conflicts alive” (Viejo-Rose 2011: 60).

Conclusion

The Bosnian society has yet to grip the true scale of human evil waged during the war as expressed through mass expulsions, executions, ethnic cleansing, rape, torture, and ultimately, genocide. Edin Hajdarpašić reflects upon the harsh reality within BiH in starker terms:

“The proliferation of new rival history and memory narratives helps to reproduce existing political divisions within the country into three distinct ethno-national camps. A variety of new monuments constructed in the post-war period, particularly the memorials dealing with the 1992-1995 war, reflect a similar pattern of competing nationalist commemorative priorities around places like Mostar, Bijeljina, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and most visibly and contentiously, Srebrenica” (Hajdarpašić 2000: 212).

Twenty–two years after the start of the Bosnian War and nineteen years after the genocide is still a short time for Bosnian citizens to clear the past and forge a common future together. It took a several decades for an active dialogue about the Holocaust to become firmly and meaningfully integrated into international discourse. Holocaust memorial museums,

51 Personal interview with Muhamed Duraković, Chief of Staff, Minister of Security, BiH, 24 August 2011.
concentration and extermination camps, and monuments have been erected across Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and the United States (US). Survivors’ voices echo throughout them as a testament to the evils of the Nazi regime, fascism, and anti-Semitism. Germany and its citizens, initially forced to account for their crimes, have also come full circle in accepting responsibility and accountability for their collective past.

Transitional justice can offer a variety of practical, emotional, and symbolic ways for a post-conflict society to heal as a unit and as individuals. These responses must take place if future conflicts are to be averted while breaking down real or imagined barriers between aggrieved groups. Transitional justice mechanisms must affirm the dignity of all peoples—regardless of their ethnicity—rather than dehumanizing the perpetrators and vindicating the survivors (Minow 1998: 146). Given their socio-political complexity, the opportunities and challenges of memorial sites as levers of transitional justice initiatives and human rights promotion in post-conflict societies are difficult to understand.

Memorials at sites of atrocity transcend the normally separate discourses within the transitional justice, peace building, museum education, and human rights communities. At memorial sites, history can be re-interpreted to help people understand and/or connect with contemporary issues, such as xenophobia, ethnic strife, and religious discrimination. As a result, it significant to explore the ways in which memorial sites convey remembrance, tolerance, and empathy as well as embody the spirit of humanitarianism and egalitarianism amidst highly polarized and traumatized populaces.

The foundation of the SPMCC embraces this hope for the future even though its very existence challenges the society to account for the war’s horrors. As Minow notes, “Public disputes over proposed and existing memorials may occasion the productive if painful kind of struggle for memory as do rights over reparations” (Minow 1998: 140). Herein lies the SPMCC’s
potential as one of the first expressions of transitional justice within BiH. For Srebrenica, the SPMCC is on the front lines of the battle over the reconciliation of the society’s painful and differing memories in order to clear the past and find their way to a more peaceful future.

Especially in BiH where so many of these sites of atrocity have been rehabilitated, for example, into schools and community centers, even what little criminal evidence remains still retains a powerful connection between past horror and current existence (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 151). Irwin-Zarecka notes that it is the sheer physicality of sites of atrocity rather than historical memory buried in our collective consciousness that “demand[s] attention, action, and feeling” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 151). Beyond the SPMCC’s relationship to other communities wrestling with their own memorialization efforts, defining a single narrative of the war remains one of the population’s tremendous challenges.52

As it relates to the SPMCC, the willingness of population—both Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs—to accept the site’s history and the way it which it memorializes the past will remain, unfortunately, antagonistic in the near future. According to the ICG report, “In some more isolated rural areas, [Bosnian] Serbs remain unrepentant of the ethnic cleansing, which they still claim was a necessary defense” (ICG 2011: 24). The report goes on to say these hostilities are especially problematic in the eastern portion of the RS—the location of Srebrenica opština (ICG 2011: 24). It is vital to point out that not all Bosnian Serbs deny that the Srebrenica genocide happened, yet pressure from within their communities is a powerful incentive to remain quiet. As Begović told me,

“‘There are [Bosnian] Serbs who do refer to incidents during the genocide and say, ‘There was some accident or somebody did something, there, near the Memorial Center [SPMCC],’ [Bosnian] Serb people who have sound mind and feel empathy

52 Personal interview with Matthew Holliday, ICMP, 25 August 2011.
to the others, but dare not show it because of the others, they use the word Memorial Center.”

History education still remains polarized. Because there is no integrated national educational curriculum between BiH’s thirteen governments, students are taught history based upon their ethnic composition as well as the dominant narrative of the entity (FBiH or RS) that manage the schools. Given that the past does not run in a consistent temporal pattern, Viejo-Rose remarks that ‘historic memory’ should therefore include a multiplicity of viewpoints, interpretations, and discourses to recognize the complexity in how individuals and groups collectively remember events (Viejo-Rose 2011: 63). And yet, as Florence Hartman distressingly points out, “The ideologies that led to the tragic events in the former Yugoslavia have not been defeated, although the regimes that endorsed them in the most criminal way have been removed” (Hartman 2010: 309; see also Arsenijević 2010: 218).

All of the ICSC’s sites are committed to connecting the past to the present by helping their respective societies not only come to terms with their violent histories. These SoC are also leveraging the past as a conduit to help visitors and students understand why these events happened so as to build a future culture of tolerance, human rights, and equality rooted in democratic principles. In short, for ‘Never Again’ to never happen again, communities must recognize the humanity in each other, regardless of their ethnicity, to prevent the seeds of hatred and intolerance from rising up in the future.

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54 There are numerous cases of the phenomenon of ‘two schools under one roof’ where students of different ethnicities are segregated, using the same building but at different times. There has been, however, much emphasis on eradicating this practice. Divided schools are more prominent in the FBiH so as to accommodate the needs of minorities whereas the RS does not. In the RS schools follow a Bosnian Serb-influenced curriculum despite and/or ignoring the fact that Bosniaks live in the entity. However, a complete study of BiH’s post-conflict educational challenges and segregated schools is outside the scope of this study. For more information on educational ethnic divisions in the FBiH refer to Ajdin Kamber, Center for Justice and Reconciliation, “Segregated Bosnian Schools Reinforce Ethnic Division,” 13 July 2011. See http://iwpr.net/report-news/segregated-bosnian-schools-reinforce-ethnic-division. Accessed on 18 August 2014.
As an emerging SoC, the SPMCC is the right location to engage future generations of Bosnian citizens to embrace their collective humanity as a peaceful nation that has done due justice to its past and buried its demons once and for all. For while the Srebrenica genocide shows humanity at its darkest hour, it is sadly not the only location in the world where genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and state terrorism were committed against civilians. One need only look at the Syrian civil war and the sectarian violence waged by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) in Iraq. The Syrian regime’s murderous approach proves that extensive human rights violations are still tactics that governments under the sway of corrupt dictators use to brutalize and control their populations. Each new conflict that erupts brings the “Never Again” mantra to the table, confronting governments with difficult decisions about if, how, why, and when (or not) to intervene.

From a collective memory standpoint, the SPMCC does accomplish its mission to keep the memory of the victims of the 1995 genocide alive. This is despite the numerous ongoing tensions between Bosniaks and Bosnian Serbs. However, the SPMCC is not able to truly fulfill its promise as a site of healing or inter-ethnic education as of yet given the challenging ethno-nationalized and politicized atmosphere surrounding its existence. This problem is compounded by the fact that the Bosnian society as a whole has not dealt with how to address and what to remember about the war’s legacy of ethnic cleansing, torture, mass rapes, and executions committed against vast portions of the population, especially in relation to the identity of the war’s victims and perpetrators. Nonetheless, hope still remains, a sentiment voiced by nearly every interviewee. Duraković said it best:

“I am sure that 100 years from today, the people of Srebrenica will live together side by side and they will have completely different things to worry about from the things they are worrying about today.”

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55 Personal interview with Muhamed Duraković, Chief of Staff, Minister of Security, BiH, 24 August 2011.
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The Dayton Agreement split the country in half between the warring ethnic groups. Post-war BiH is one state with two political entities: the Federation of Bosnia i Herzegovina (FBiH), mostly inhabited by Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, and the Republika Srpska (RS), dominated by Bosnian Serbs. The BiH government’s office of the President was split into three, requiring an elected official from each of the three ethnic groups. Moreover, the country has thirteen separate governments (one for each of the 10 cantons plus the FBiH, RS, and BiH). Upon the war’s conclusion, the country was administered by the Office of the High Representative in BiH (OHR) leading to numerous steps in national integration. However, there remain separate telecommunication companies, fire departments, utility services, and segregated schools in each entity, and often within individual cities.

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\(^{b}\) One of the most contentious areas, the city of Brčko, remains under the independent authority of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), given the city’s strategic positioning on the border with both Serbia and Croatia (the highly disputed Zone of Separation) per the Dayton Agreement. For more information refer to The New York Times’ “The Dayton Accords: A Status Report,” 10 June 1996. See http://www.nytimes.com/specials/bosnia/context/dayton.html. Accessed on 15 April 2013.


\(^{d}\) In addition to the FBiH and RS, there are Bosnian Croats in the southwestern portion of the country that support ethnic separation in the form of their own entity: Herceg-Bosna. For current developments refer to the Herceg-Bosna: Hrvati Bosne i Hercegovine website. See http://www.hercegbosna.org/eng/current-issues/nation-building/exclusive-croatian-counties-are-going-for-referendum-to-leave-federation-bh-4169.html. Accessed on 15 April 2013.