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Ana Gvozdic

Macalester College, anagvozdic98@gmail.com

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Memorialization of Children in War in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

Ana Gvozdić

Prof. Nadya Nedelsky, International Studies

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Abstract:

Can remembering the tragic fate of children in war help overcome the divisive narratives of the past in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo? This paper addresses this question by examining efforts to commemorate children in war in these countries through monuments, exhibitions, and other creative formats, including a video and a theatrical performance. Based on in-depth, qualitative interviews with civil society representatives behind these initiatives, and those familiar with them, I argue that efforts to commemorate children in war can both consolidate and challenge divisive victimization narratives. When memorialization efforts go beyond victimization, their emphasis on children in war can emerge as a powerful tool in service of peace and reconciliation.

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Introduction

Can remembering the tragic fate of children in war help build a bridge to peace in its aftermath? Unfortunately, the wars following the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s brought about child casualties. Although identifying a total number of murdered or disappeared children in these wars proves difficult, different actors conduct research on local and national levels. Such actors also work to commemorate the children who died or went missing in the wars, or whose childhood was affected by the wars. In this paper, I focus on such memorialization efforts through seven case studies from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Within my research, I include three monuments: one dedicated to children killed in NATO bombing, located in Belgrade, Serbia, and two monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina: one dedicated to children killed in the besieged Sarajevo and a monument to children in East Sarajevo. I also explore the initiative *Jer me se tiče* (“Because it concerns me”) based in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which aims to erect a monument to children in that city but engages in other creative memorialization efforts in the process, such as one in an online video format, which I examine more closely. Furthermore, I look at two exhibitions: The War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo and the ‘Once upon a Time and Never Again’ exhibition in Prishtina, Kosovo by the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo. Finally, I look at a play titled “A Lullaby for Mladenka” developed by the Mostar Youth Theater in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I situate the analysis of these case studies within the broader context of memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo from the standpoint of memorialization as a transitional justice mechanism. I interject empirical data into the theoretical discussion regarding the benefits of memorialization for peace and

reconciliation as transitional justice goals. On the one hand, transitional justice literature presupposes the benefits of memorialization projects for peace and reconciliation by allowing individuals and the wider society to deal with the past (Dragovic-Soso, 2010; Shaheed, 2014). On the other hand, McDowell and Braniff (2014) bring the attention to divisive memories that exist in societies transitioning from conflict, such as those this research project focuses on. Their observation echoes the descriptions of the dominant narratives of memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, which I refer to as the victimization narratives. Namely, in each of these countries, the dominant approaches to remembering the past emphasize the victimhood of a single ethnic group, while neglecting the victimhood of others and thereby evading the responsibility for war crimes – an approach to memory that does not seem conducive to peace and reconciliation (Fridman, 2016; Mihaljinac, 2017; Sokol, 2014; Barkan and Bećirbašić, 2015; Baliqi, 2018). Within this theoretical and regional framework, I ask: what role do memorialization efforts focused on children in war play within the dominant narratives of victimization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo? If remembering is conflictual, can memorialization efforts contribute to peace and reconciliation? Does the emphasis on children have the power to invite empathy in a way that goes beyond such divisive narratives?

My engagement with these questions relies upon semi-structured interviews with civil society representatives from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, who are familiar with the case studies at hand, or have themselves worked on the development of the memorialization efforts I study. Based on this research, I argue that memorialization efforts focused on children in war can both consolidate and challenge the dominant

narratives of victimization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, depending on how these memorialization efforts conceptualize and commemorate children. Memorialization efforts focused on children can be a powerful tool in support of peace and reconciliation processes when they go beyond victimization narratives.

To explore this theme, I start with contextual information relevant for my study: historical background and the literature review which draws from transitional justice literature, memorialization literature specific to Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, and literature focused on children in war from diverse fields. I then describe my methodology, before getting into the main portion of the paper, which is divided into three sections. Within the first chapter, **“the Dominant Approaches to Memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo”**, I interpret monuments in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and point out the ways in which they consolidate the dominant narratives of victimization. I group the remaining case studies within the second chapter about **“The Alternative Approaches to Memorializing Children in War”**, which examines different efforts that challenge the dominant narratives. The final chapter, **“The Impact of Memorialization for Peace and Reconciliation”**, explores the impact of acknowledging the victimhood of others and representing children as active agents for building trust, establishing contact, and supporting individual healing, as processes important for reconciliation, before reflecting on the ways in which memorialization of children can communicate a message for peace.

Historical Context

This paper is concerned with the armed conflicts that took place during the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Partisans – the communist leaders who resisted fascism – founded Yugoslavia as a federation of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia (Hoare, 2010, p. 114). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Slobodan Milošević, the President of the League of Communists of Serbia and later the President of the Republic of Serbia, re-established Serbian control over the autonomous provinces in Yugoslavia, Vojvodina and Kosovo, and sought to further strengthen the federal power over the republics. (Hoare, 2010). In response, the Slovenian and Croatian delegations, who desired greater autonomy for their republics, left the congress of the League of Communists in 1990, thereby starting the dissolution of Yugoslavia (Hoare, 2010). While the war in Slovenia lasted ten days, the conflict in Croatia, which had a much more sizable Serbian population, lasted longer.

After Slovenia and Croatia, the armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) lasted from 1992 to 1995. Hoare (2010) names this phase of the conflict as “the bloodiest and most protracted phase” of Yugoslavia’s dissolution, given Bosnia’s “nationally heterogenous nature” – the fact that Bosniaks (Muslims), (Bosnian) Croats, and (Bosnian) Serbs, as well as minorities, lived in BiH as they do today (p. 111). For the most part, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was fought between the JNA (Yugoslav National Army) and Serb forces on one hand, and the Croatian and Bosniak forces on the other. However, another phase of the conflict pitted Bosniak and Croat forces against one another in the conflict between the predominantly Bosniak Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO). The war started with the Serbian attack on East

Bosnia, a Bosniak-majority territory, and it included acts of ethnic cleansing: “the systematic massacre, expulsion, detention, torture, and rape of non-Serbs” (Hoare, 2010, p. 125). Furthermore, the war included “the longest siege in the history of modern warfare, the siege of Sarajevo, which began on 6 April 1992 and lasted until 29 February 1996” (Barkan & Bećirbašić, 2015, p. 96). When the Serb forces committed genocide against Bosniaks in Srebrenica in 1995, Croatian and Bosnian forces with the support of NATO air-strikes brought an end to the conflict, which finally led to the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 (Hoare, 2010). Within this agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided into two entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the *Republika Srpska* (The Serbian Republic).

This agreement, however, did not address Kosovo’s future, and the conflict continued between Serbian security forces and Kosovo Albanian groups in the late 1990s, leading to NATO’s intervention against Serbia in 1999. However, the early 1990s in Kosovo were rather peaceful. During this time, Milošević suppressed Kosovo’s autonomy. Albanians in Kosovo were fired from their jobs and replaced by the Serbs, but under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, they resisted peacefully, establishing parallel institutions (Ramet, 2002; Judah, 2008). It was only in 1997 that the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), initially a small group of around 150 men, began to attack Serbian police in Kosovo (Judah, 2008, p. 79; Ramet, 2002, p. 318). The Serbian leadership deployed tanks, police, and army troops to Kosovo and by 1998, the violence significantly escalated (Judah, 2008). Serbian forces’ attacks on Kosovar Albanians led to a total number of 1.45 million displaced people when accounting for internal displacements (Judah, 2008, p. 88). By March 1998, Serbian forces had already killed some 2,000 Kosovar Albanians, subsequently reburying 836

bodies in different locations in Serbia in efforts to conceal the crimes (Judah, 2008). Nonetheless, the genocide in Srebrenica, BiH was at the international community's forefront: motivated by that experience, the Western leaders took action through a 78-day long bombing campaign by NATO in Serbia, Kosovo, as well as targets in Montenegro (Judah, 2008). NATO's intervention brought about civilian deaths: approximately 500 casualties on 90 different occasions. However, Judah (2008) points out that "ironically, a large number of them were Kosovo Albanians who may have been used in columns along the road as human shields by Serbian forces" (p. 89). With NATO's intervention, the UN administration entered, allowing the return of many refugees, while the Serbian forces had to withdraw from Kosovo. Many Serbs moved from the towns in Kosovo and today mostly reside in enclaves such as Gračanica in northern Kosovo (Judah, 2008, p. 92). In the next section, I explore how people remember these events today.

Literature Review

To study the memorialization of children in war in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, I build on literature from diverse fields. Firstly, I situate my approach to memorialization within transitional justice literature, outlining the theoretical assumptions about remembering the past and the construction of a more peaceful and just future. However, I also provide an opposing argument which questions the positive impact of memorialization on peacebuilding, particularly in societies transitioning from conflict, such as those that my research focuses on. This literature draws my attention to the competitive victimhood that permeates memory, and I summarize in greater detail how the narratives of victimization manifest in all three countries I focus on, but also the ways in

which civil society provides alternative frames of memory. Having explored memorialization more broadly and with reference to the specific contexts that this research deals with, I turn to literature about children in war. I acknowledge their particularly vulnerable position in conflict and note the development of a universal conception of a child in the context of humanitarian aid whereby children are entitled to aid regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. Based on this background, I wonder whether there is potential to conceptualize children universally in efforts that commemorate their suffering, even in ethnically divisive contexts as those I study. I also summarize the few research studies that, like mine, focus on memorialization of children in war. These, alongside the literature on representation of children in war movies, draw my attention to which children these memorials include, how they represent them, and their potential to challenge the dominant narratives.

Memorialization as a Transitional Justice Mechanism: Theoretical Approaches

Commemorating past atrocities serves as a transitional justice mechanism. Teitel (2003) defines transitional justice as “the conception of justice associated with periods of political change, characterized by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes” (p. 69). Another definition clarifies what wrongdoings transitional justice seeks to address: “human rights abuses, mass atrocities, or other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war” (Bickford, 2004, p. 1045). While the field started with criminal legal responses to such atrocities, over time it has evolved its types of activities or mechanisms (Bell, 2009). This is why Subotić (2013) explains

transitional justice as “a set of mechanisms aimed at addressing legacies of violence”, which includes truth commissions, official apologies, reparations, and memorialization (p. 266). In fact, the relevant mechanism for this paper – memorialization – can be viewed as a subsection of reparations. De Grief (2006) distinguishes between material and symbolic, as well as individual and collective reparations (p. 454, 468-469). While material reparations refer to financial compensation and services, such as health care, housing, and education, symbolic reparations seek to address the harm through different means. The collective symbolic measures, which parallel memorialization initiatives that I focus on, take place in different forms: “monuments, museums, street names, memory sites” or others (Subotic, 2013, p. 267; Stan and Nedelsky, 2013, p. 86).

As a transitional justice mechanism, memorialization ought to contribute to the goals of transitional justice, including peace and reconciliation. Bickford (2004) explains that transitional justice mechanisms serve “to build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future” (p. 1045). Some scholars explore the important role of memory in transitional justice through an akin concept of ‘dealing with the past’. Dragovic-Soso (2010) defines ‘dealing with the past’ as the “process of remembrance and the construction of a repository of public knowledge about a traumatic past” (p. 34). The aim of dealing with the past is “to counter denial and achieve broad public acknowledgement not just of what happened, but also the victims of the crimes and these crimes’ perpetrators” with the ultimate goal to punish the guilty, provide reparations to the victims, and establish a commitment “that nothing like it will ever be allowed to happen again” (Dragovic-Soso, 2010, p. 34). In that sense, dealing with the past echoes the transitional justice approach following a mass atrocity, which aims to establish the truth of the events, address the harm to the victims,

and build a peaceful and just society. As an example of symbolic reparations, memorialization acknowledges victims' suffering and creates a platform where victims and survivors can share their stories. This function allows for a restoring of dignity through memorialization (Shaheed, 2014; Subotic, 2013). Dragovic-Soso (2010) explains that this connection between memorialization and healing stems from a psychological rationale for dealing with the past which asserts that "giving traumatic memory a public space helps victims and survivors work through the trauma" (p. 34). However, the impact of memorialization is not contained to the individual level. Remembering the crimes is a form of truth-telling, which can serve to document previously marginalized histories, thereby helping consolidate the history of past atrocities (Naidu, 2006). Raising awareness about past atrocities helps promote accountability and prevent violence in the future, linking memorialization to peace (Shaheed, 2014). Finally, facilitating individual processing and consolidating a shared history can help repair damaged relationships and rebuild trust, which is how memorialization can support reconciliation too (Shaheed, 2014; Subotic, 2013).

However, other scholars question memorialization's potential to support peace and reconciliation efforts. McDowell and Braniff (2014) ask: "But can memory and its many uses threaten to undermine or derail a peace process (...) through perpetuating or even reactivating conflict?" (p. 4, 6). In their book "Commemoration as Conflict: Space, Memory and Identity in Peace Processes", McDowell and Braniff (2014) explore memory in different contexts, including Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Sri Lanka, Israel/Palestine, South Africa, as well as the former Yugoslavia. Based on their research, they suggest that "memory-work in societies experiencing conflict or attempting to

transition to a form of peace is nearly always conflictual in that it is invariably contested by others” (p. 170). If remembering is conflictual, how can memorialization, as a transitional justice mechanism, support peace, one of its goals? With regard to the former Yugoslavia, McDowell and Braniff (2014) “propose that the public expressions of memory that commemorate the violence visited on these countries throughout the 20th century embed ‘othering’ and continue the conflictual relationships between nations, regions, towns and neighbors” (p. 129). The othering and conflictual relationships relate to another element of commemorative practices which they describe: “self-identification as victim” through commemorative practices within the “competition for hegemonic victimhood”, which is “a key factor in legitimating both violence and its aftermath” (McDowell and Braniff, 2014, p. 173). McDowell and Braniff (2014) argue that instead of supporting peace efforts, memorialization has the potential to exacerbate conflictual relationships by strengthening the division between ‘self’ and ‘other’, whereby each group perceives themselves as a victim and a legitimate actor in the conflict. In the next section, I turn to more in-depth studies of the memory landscape in the former Yugoslavian countries that echo similar findings.

Remembering the Past: The Narratives of Victimization

A common frame for speaking about the wars of the 1990s in Serbia is one of Serb victimization, most apparent in memories of the NATO bombing. The process of victimization entails presenting both civilians and soldiers as victims. David (2014) provides an example of this narrative in official speeches, such as that of the Belgrade city mayor who “entrenched the idea that all Serbs were victims in the wars of the 1990s” since “civil[ian] victims and those who believed they were fighting for the freedom of their

homeland were equally considered as victims” (p. 667). Within this narrative, the NATO bombing is particularly important. Fridman (2016) explains that “the memory of Serbian victimhood during the 1999 NATO bombing was promoted and elevated, while other events of the wars have been buried in deafening silence” (p. 444). With the elevation of NATO bombing as an example of victimization comes along the neglect of other crimes, particularly those committed by Serbs. Hence, Mihaljinac (2017) claims that the victimization narrative “represents Serbs as the absolute victims of the bombing (repressing the topic of responsibility for war crimes)” (p. 341). In McDowell and Braniff’s words (2014), such an approach to remembering can be seen as Serbia’s attempts to secure a hegemonic victimhood status. Since the monument to children killed in NATO bombing is one of my case studies, understanding the meaning of this event for the victimization narratives in Serbia proves important.

Victimhood appears as a prominent theme in the competing narratives of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s different ethnic groups as well. Sokol describes the construction of three memories - the Bosniak, Serb, and Croat one (Sokol, 2014, p. 107). Barkan and Bećirbašić (2015) agree, explaining how “each ethnic group in Bosnia and Herzegovina advocates its own particular ‘ethnic truth’” (p. 98). With this approach, “everybody wants to be a victim”, which “removes any (collective) guilt and attempts to evade being marked as an aggressor by others” (Sokol, 2014, p.110). Similar to the Serbian context, each group perceives themselves as the victim, which makes it hard to take responsibility for crimes. Barkan and Bećirbašić (2015) explain how “multiple stakeholders, including international and national judiciaries, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, politicians, historians, and victims’ associations (...) fostered three divergent ethnohistorical

interpretations, which (...) are all designed to inflame ethnonational memories with emotional capital to sustain the conflict” (Barkan & Bećirbašić, 2015, p. 97). Sokol (2014) explores the role that monuments play in this process and claims that they “can be very dangerous, fortify divisions, and even provoke future conflicts” (p.12). The fact that each group presents their understanding of history according to which they are exclusively victims poses an obstacle for peace and reconciliation. Studying the official remembrance efforts and memorialization in both Serbian and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Subotić (2013) argues that these mechanisms “have been largely used to entrench further mutually incompatible versions of the past and contribute to a renewed cycle of mistrust, untruth, and injustice” (p. 266). In that sense, the memory landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina echoes McDowell and Braniff’s concerns (2014) regarding memorialization’s capacity to strengthen conflictual relationships, rather than support the peace process.

Competing victimhood narratives show up in the case of Kosovo too, where the contested nature of statehood further influences the memory landscape. Baliqi (2018) argues that “ethnocentric and contested memories persist” in Kosovo (p. 472). Similarly to memorialization in Serbia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Baliqi (2018) describes a “kind of ‘competitive victimhood’ and historical victimization narrative in Kosovo”, which presents “one’s own ethnic group as the victim and the other as the aggressor” (p. 478). In this context, “denying war crimes committed by their members” is also frequent (Baliqi, 2018, p. 478). Such victimization narratives are particularly prominent among the Serbian community in Kosovo, which, in addition to the memories of NATO bombing, also emphasizes how the Serbs in Kosovo were forced to leave or were internally displaced within Kosovo (Baliqi, 2018, p. 475). However, considering Kosovo’s peculiar position,

“war remembrance also serves as an ideological and political foundation for the emergence and consolidation of the state” (Baliqi, 2018, pp. 474-475). In this context, “the glorification of heroism” is frequent, focusing on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters as national martyrs (Baliqi, 2018, pp. 474-475). As a result, other social groups are neglected, such as survivors of sexual violence, although there have been more efforts in recent years to include their stories in the memorialization process (Baliqi, 2018). Despite the particularities of Kosovo’s memorialization resulting from its contested statehood, victimization narratives and denial of crimes play out in similar ways to its neighboring countries, leading to negative consequences for transitional justice efforts. Baliqi (2018) points out that “the conflicting cultures of remembrance hinder an inclusive approach to the violent past and transitional justice”, while the “lack of political will to deal with allegations, and even denial, of war crimes committed by each side is a crucial obstacle to reconciliation efforts (p. 472).

Considering such harmful effects of memorialization, what should be done to support peace and reconciliation efforts? While this is a difficult question to answer, a more inclusive approach to remembering might be a good step forward. McDowell and Braniff (2014) acknowledge that there is a challenge “to find creative ways of remembering that enable us to go forward as a society” (p. 1). Considering the role that ethnic divisions play in the context of the former Yugoslavia, they specifically question the emphasis on ethnicity in memorialization. They ask: “Should victims be commemorated according to their ethnicity?” (McDowell and Braniff, 2014, p. 143). If the competing narratives of victimhood are harmful, perhaps the better response is to focus on more ethnically inclusive approaches to memorialization. However, they also find it important to consider “the

effects of a monument that sets an equivalence between the ethnic groups” (McDowell and Braniff, 2014, p. 143). Nevertheless, they side with the former idea when claiming that “achieving understanding of shared memories is not to level or equalise suffering, but rather it is to remove the division from the memories of space and history that we take forward with us in future generations” (McDowell and Braniff, 2014, p. 147). They go on to say that “escaping the politics of blame and aggression may require that commemoration and sites of memorial continue to remember, but also encourage understanding” of shared memories as discussed above (McDowell and Braniff, 2014, p. 147). Having considered the negative implications of remembering in divided societies, they argue for the importance of shifting away from division, blame, and aggression in commemorative processes as a way to better support peace and reconciliation efforts through memorialization activities. Analyzing memorialization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sokol (2014) agrees when claiming that the “initiatives that do not commemorate victims in an ethno-national way can be a good step forward” (p. 122). Similarly, Baliqi (2018) calls on the younger generations in Kosovo “to develop an inclusive politics of remembrance, memorial practices and sites, historical narratives, and textbooks [that] must go beyond established ethnical articulations” (p. 481). Informed by these ideas, I pay attention to the inclusivity with respect to ethnic identity within the particular memorialization efforts that I explore in the three countries.

While these scholars advocate against the ethnicization of memory, Janine Clark instead cautions against the politicization of memory. By politicization, Clark (2016) means the ways in which political interests “shape and influence memorial practices in post-conflict societies” (p. 1200). Clark (2016) describes two instances of politicizing the

annual commemorations of the Srebrenica genocide. In 2015, the commemoration almost did not occur due to highly politicized events revolved around the arrest of Naser Orić. He was a senior commander of Bosniak forces who was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for crimes against Serbs in and around Srebrenica but was acquitted. Six years later, Serbia issued another warrant and the Swiss authorities arrested him, which started a political argument between Serbia and BiH. In response, the organizers of the Srebrenica commemoration threatened to cancel the event unless the Swiss authorities extradited Orić back to BiH, arguing that the commemorations cannot go ahead without their “hero” (Clark, 2016, p. 1203). In doing so, they shifted the focus of the commemoration away from the Srebrenica victims towards Orić’s case. The same year, the Serbian Prime Minister at the time, Aleksandar Vučić, attended the Srebrenica commemoration. Attendees of the commemoration protested against Vučić, throwing stones and bottles at him, which led to his leaving the event. They argued that Vučić’s reasons for attending were political, rather than genuine (Clark, 2016, p. 1204). Regardless of what his motivation was, Clark (2016) argued based on her research with a local organization in Srebrenica that his visit “detracted from the purpose of memorialization” and that while the event “should have been an occasion for quiet reflection and remembrance, (...) high politics dominated the event and victims were thus pushed into the background” (Clark, 2016, p. 1205). In the examples of Orić and Vučić, politicized debates occupied the central stage of the commemorations at the expense of the victims.

Her argument about the harmful effects of politicization in the context of Srebrenica commemorations is helpful for understanding memorialization efforts more broadly. Taking on the “politicization” lens allows us to interpret how other memorialization

practices can have conflictual effects even when they are not ethnically coded. For example, Sokol (2014) presents “positive” examples of memorialization which emphasize a civic, as opposed to ethnic perspective, overlooking the fact that such memorials can be political as well, and hence, contested. She shares an example of the Alley of Heroes (Aleja heroja) in Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina), which is an alley with busts of Partisan and socialist heroes from the Yugoslav time. She explains that “within the civic narrative, the memory and heritage of the antifascist struggle is appropriated and connected with the war of 1992 – 1995 for the strengthening of a more inclusive and less ethnically interpreted history” (Sokol, 2014, p. 121). Thereby, she draws a connection between a contemporary, civic – meaning ethnically inclusive – narrative, and the anti-fascist narrative in the context of the Second World War and the Yugoslav period that came after that war. However, Sokol herself recognizes that the dominant Croatian narrative today views Partisans negatively due to their association with Yugoslavia, which they perceive as the time of Serb hegemony. Because of this, the practice of destroying Partisan monuments is common among Croats (Sokol, 2014, p. 117). Applying this understanding of the Croatian perspective helps us recognize that the Alley of Heroes, although not focused on a particular ethnic group, is nonetheless political due to its association with the Partisans and Yugoslavia. As such, it invokes negative responses from the Croatian community, raising questions about its contribution to society. In that sense, while McDowell and Braniff (2014) bring our attention to the conflictual outcomes of memorialization that establishes hegemonic victimhood of a given ethnic group, Clark (2016) highlights that these harmful effects can occur even within memorialization efforts that are focused on “shared” narratives when those narratives are politicized. Hence, I take on Clark’s politicization lens

in the analysis as well, paying attention to the ways in which the interests of high politics shape and influence memorialization efforts with harmful effects, even if they might be ethnically inclusive.

While the dominant narratives in each of the countries revolve around the victimhood of a single ethnic group, other narratives exist too, and are mostly put forward by civil society organizations. In the Serbian context, Fridman (2018) analyzes the efforts of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, a group of young memory activists “who in recent years have been rejecting not only politics of victimization and denial in their society but even more so, have been challenging the ongoing processes of silencing the past”, in efforts “toward peace and reconciliation” (p. 426). In contrast to the victimization narratives, they “push for critical dealing with questions of responsibility” (Fridman, 2018, p. 426). This group created an alternative calendar titled “Transitional Justice Calendar”, but internally referred to as the bloody calendar, which seeks to commemorate the events, such as war crimes and massacres, which are neglected within the “state-sponsored hegemonic memories of silence and denial of the recent wars of the 1990s and crimes committed” (Fridman, 2018, p. 427). However, it is important to acknowledge that the young memory activists’ work is “often dismissed by state officials and by their peers, or simply unheard of” (p. 424). In Bosnia and Herzegovina there are also efforts to go beyond the three victimization narratives in that society. Sokol (2014) refers to the fourth narrative: “the Bosnian civic or ‘unconstituent’ narrative that does not commemorate the war in an ethno-national way” (p. 120). In other words, it is a narrative that does not belong to any of the three constituent ethno-national groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. Within this narrative, she references “‘counter’ monuments that refute

the prevailing ethno-national narratives and give a more inclusive memory of the war” (Sokol, 2014, p. 120). One of the examples she provides are the Sarajevo roses, shrapnel damage on the streets caused by mortar shells and painted in red, which “are silent about the identity and ethnicity of both victims and perpetrators” (Sokol, 2014, p. 120). In the case of Kosovo, Visoka (2016) looks at three “local civil society groups [which] have tried to reverse the ethno-political domination of the public sphere in Serbia and Kosovo in order to offer victims and their families spaces for different forms of commemoration” (p. 71). He focuses mostly on the Kosovo Memory Book by the Humanitarian Law Center, an example of virtual memorialization that documents killed and missing persons from the 1998-99 conflict in Kosovo, which is “inclusive for all sides in conflict” (Visoka, 2016, p. 63). He argues that “the new politics of remembrance undertaken by civil society groups in Kosovo aspires to liberate the society from ethno-national tendencies and provides a promising pathway for ethnic reconciliation in Kosovo” (Visoka, 2016, p. 63). While the dominant narratives related to the conflict in all three countries emphasize the victimhood of a single ethnic group, it is important to acknowledge the existence of alternative approaches mostly led by civil society actors. Having provided the relevant framework for memorialization, I now turn my attention to the social category of children in war.

Children in War

In this research, I focus specifically on memorialization efforts that emphasize children: an approach that I have observed to be increasing in the past years in the former Yugoslavian region. I narrowed down my research to memorialization of “children in war” – a term meant to encompass children who died in war, went missing during the war, or lived during the war in ways that inevitably had an impact on their childhood. Due to my

focus on a specific social group, I provide a review of literature focused on social constructions of children more broadly and in war, as well as their representation in memorialization efforts and war films.

In 1996, Graça Machel, a Mozambican politician and humanitarian, produced a ground-breaking report “The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children”, which helps contextualize my research. In this document, Machel (1996) recognized armed conflicts’ disproportionate impact on children. She explored different issues, including those experienced by child soldiers, refugees and internally displaced children, as well as child victims of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. The report noted the impact of landmines and sanctions on children, as well as the consequences of armed conflict for their health, nutrition, psychological recovery, reintegration, and education. This report influenced the adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution 51/77, which led to the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Machel’s work drew immense attention to a particularly vulnerable group in armed conflict, which I focus on in a post-conflict context.

Her later work creates the space for connections between peacebuilding, memory work, and children in war. In 2000, Machel presented a review of progress at the International Conference on War-Affected children, in which she pointed out that “the best way to protect children from wars is to stop them happening - by encouraging equitable development and finding peaceful ways to resolve conflict” (Machel, 2000, p. 41). While her work focuses on understanding the impacts of armed conflicts on children, she acknowledges the importance of preventing armed conflicts altogether. She further points out that “after the fighting is over, the memories of atrocities and injustice live on. These

must be specifically addressed through processes of justice and community healing” (Machel, 2000, p. 36). Although her report does not focus specifically on the role of remembering children in war for peacebuilding, she acknowledges the importance of memory, which I build upon.

Furthermore, I consider other important moments from the history of humanitarian aid that can inform my exploration of children in war in the context of memorialization. In the early 20th century, the Save the Children Fund emerged with an internationalist approach developing “the concept of the world’s child - to whom all nations, irrespective of politics and other considerations, owe obligations of care and protection (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014, p. 4). At first, the organization faced opposition in Britain for their efforts to provide aid to German children who were starving, for they were children of “former enemies” after World War One. However, they successfully framed “children as universal – indivisible along lines of nation, race or politics”, garnering support for their efforts (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014, p. 4). After the Second World War, UNICEF, a newly established UN body, followed their example: its founding director “insisted that the children of ‘ex-enemies’ should receive relief along with the children of Allied countries” (Cregan and Cuthbert, 2014, p. 8). While these examples describe a universalist and inclusive understanding of children affected by war in the context of humanitarian aid, I wonder if these principles can translate onto memorialization efforts, as examples of symbolic reparations. Conducting my research in divided contexts, I ask: Can memories of children in war in the former Yugoslavia invoke conceptions of universal suffering as opposed to ethnically specific suffering? Do they have the power to invite empathy for the

suffering of “former enemies” in ways alike to the humanitarian aid context? To explore these questions, I turn to other case studies of memorials to children in conflict.

While memorialization of children in war and conflicts is under-researched, Reyes (2019) studied a monument to children in Colombia, which only included children deemed to be innocent. She analyzed the establishment of a memorial to eight children, who were killed by mistake by a police unit. Instead, the police intended to murder another group of children – children considered “undesirable” due to their recruitment by drug lords. The state built a monument which “portrayed the children as innocent martyrs” while the “judicial and commemorative processes strategically emphasized the victims’ vulnerability and innocence” (Reyes, 2019, p. 10). This monument “did not embody the need to uphold the human rights of all youth, even those marginal young people caught in violent drug, paramilitary, or guerilla wars” (Reyes, 2019, p. 4). Hence, Reyes (2019) argues that in emphasizing the innocence of some children, the state “negates non-innocent children, rendering them as ungrievable” (p. 13). In this case, the Colombian government excludes some children – the non-innocent children – from its commemorative practices, failing to embody a universal approach to children. While her analysis comes out of a completely different geographical and historical context, it brings my attention to children’s innocence and exclusionary nature of such monuments, which I deem particularly valuable in the context of divisive memories in the former Yugoslavia. To further contextualize the emphasis on innocence in memorials to children in war, I build on broader social constructions of children as innocent. Ansell (2017) summarizes the predominant images of children in the West in the last four centuries, one of which is the Apollonian concept of childhood. Jenks (2002) relied on a mythological image of Apollo to describe this

tradition of conceptualizing children. According to this view, children are “little angels”: they are innocent and passive; they need protection from the world; and they should be happy (Ansell, 2017, p. 14). Therefore, Reyes’ (2019) analysis of innocence depicted in the memorial builds on broader conceptualization of children, but also points out its potential for excluding the non-innocent children, which I pay attention to in my analysis.

A different example of remembering children in Kosovo draws my attention to memorials’ potential to challenge the dominant narratives. Berisha (2017) studied the efforts of Kosovar Albanian parents’ associations to preserve the memory of their missing children. In this study, the definition of children is a relational one: the missing persons are someone’s children, even if they might be above the age of 18. While this conceptualization differs from the age-based one that I rely upon in my paper, I find Berisha’s work helpful nonetheless. Her fieldwork with Kosovar Albanian parents’ associations between 2014 and 2016, allows her to explore how the parents of missing children engaged in “a wide range of acts of remembrance”, which “significantly alter the dominant narratives of the past [and] resist social forgetting” (Berisha, 2017, p. 50). Much like Baliqi (2018), Berisha (2017) recognizes the “discourse of martyrdom and glorification of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters” in how Kosovar society remembers the past (p. 41) She explains how “the missing persons did not belong to the category of the martyr”, causing the memory of their fate to fall behind (Berisha, 2017, p. 41). In response, the parents – more specifically, the mothers – developed “strategies for the survival of memory” such as placing photographs of the missing in front of the Parliament building in Prishtina (Berisha, 2017, p. 43). Just like Baliqi (2018), Berisha (2017) “witnessed a shift in the politics of memory in Kosovo” during her fieldwork, which better included formerly neglected

groups, in this case by establishing the week of the disappeared and erecting a monument to the missing (p. 48). Her exploration of the parents' "alternative memory-work" with regard to missing children, encourages me to consider how remembering children could challenge dominant narratives. While Berisha (2017) explores remembering missing children in an effort to draw attention to a neglected group within Kosovo, I am interested in the potential of remembering children to challenge the dominant narratives of competing victimhood across ethnic lines.

Apart from memorials, the literature about war movies helps understand whom the children in war represent, and how. Lury (2010) explains how "children are 'perfect victims', since they are blameless, they make the wrongs of war seem all the more wrong" (p. 105). Because they are "perfect victims", they easily communicate anti-war messages. As such, movies about children in war utilize "one child's experience, or more accurately their presence as a small, emotive figure, (...) to 'stand in' for many deaths. In these instances, the child's narrative function is effectively to act as a metonym for wider suffering" (Lury, 2010, p. 107). These insights about the representation of children in film highlights the messages that memorializing children sends regarding the innocence and categories of victims. Another relevant insight from Lury's (2010) work relates not to whom the children represent, but how they are represented. On one hand, she points out that a child "is all too often a vehicle for adult concerns and fears and fails to act or represent its own interests and desires" (Lury, 2010, p. 109). This statement hints at the representation of children in war movies as passive. On the other hand, she also recognizes films in which "children caught up in war are not simply witnesses but agents", illustrating a more active role (Lury, 2010, p. 144). Although her analysis deals with film, meaning

that it includes fictional stories with very different goals, her research provides valuable insight about the different ways of representing children in war: as active agents or passive victims.

Methodology

This research project builds on a shorter paper I wrote as part of my study away program and other experiences I had in the region. The War Childhood Museum was the first example focused on children that caught my attention and opened my eyes to other, less-known examples in the region. I first got the opportunity to visit the War Childhood Museum through different youth educational programs that I participated in and helped organize in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When I later worked on a paper about memorialization in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more specifically, its divisive nature, the War Childhood Museum stood out as an example of an inclusive, universal memorialization effort with positive impact on society. This example made me curious about the role that memorialization of children plays in post-war societies. Then, on a study away program in Serbia and Kosovo, I stumbled upon the monument dedicated to the children killed in NATO bombing in Belgrade and had the opportunity to visit the “Once Upon a Time and Never Again” exhibition in Prishtina. For the research paper on this topic that I wrote as part of my study away program, I looked at the War Childhood Museum, the monument in Belgrade, but also the monuments in Sarajevo, which I was familiar with having conducted an internship in Sarajevo the year before. I concluded that paper recognizing the need for additional research, which looks at memorialization of children in other contexts and using different formats (Gvozdic, 2020). Hence, for my Honors Project, I included a case study

from Kosovo - the aforementioned exhibition organized by the Humanitarian Law Center. From my research advisors and other research participants, I discovered two additional case studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina in an online and a theatrical format, which helped me explore other forms of memorialization that focus on children. Through this process, I settled on the case studies that I analyze in this paper. In conversations with research participants, I discovered additional examples of remembering children in war, mostly other monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which I left out of my analysis due to time constraints and the sense that the existing case studies help me explore the theme comprehensively.

To study the case studies I selected, I relied on semi-structured interviews with civil society representatives in addition to the theoretical framework that I brought into this study. Recognizing that the academic literature about my case studies is scarce, I chose to interview local actors who are familiar with the memorials and the context in which they take place. I conducted 11 interviews, 3 with representatives of civil society organizations from Serbia, 7 representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 2 from Kosovo. In collaboration with the research participants, I assigned them pseudonyms with which I refer to them throughout the paper. Out of these 11 research participants, some were themselves involved in the case studies, such as Amela, a former employee of the War Childhood Museum; Marta from the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo; Vedad and Katarina, a director and an actress affiliated with the Mostar Youth Theater; and members of the *Jer me se tiče* initiative, Omar and Luka. As such, they were able to explain to me the motivations behind memorializing children in war and the desired impact of such memorialization within the existing narratives. Other research participants work for civil

society organizations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, which deal with issues related to transitional justice and memory. Based on their academic and professional background, they could contextualize the memorialization efforts that I study and their impact. When it comes to the research participants from civil society organizations in Serbia, these included Zoran, Nikola, and Marija from Forum ZFD, the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. The CSO representatives from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sara and Sofija, work for the Forum ZFD and the Post-Conflict Research Center. Finally relating to Kosovo, I also interviewed Nita, an employee of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Kosovo. Although my interview questions, as outlined below, helped me gain a more comprehensive understanding of memorialization efforts, it is important to acknowledge that as members of civil society, all of my research participants belong to a particular social category, which is not representative of the whole society, and whose perspectives oftentimes differ from the state-sponsored dominant approaches. The full list of research participants is available in the Appendix.

Although the research participants comprise a diverse group in terms of physical location and connection to the different case studies, the interviews followed a similar format. I started the interviews with broader questions about how their society remembers the past. I made sure to clarify potential differences between the official, state-sanctioned memorialization narratives and the approach to memory by civil society members or citizens at large. In addition to the personal and academic knowledge that I brought in regarding the ways in which different actors approach memory, structuring the interview in this way helped me further ensure that I am getting a nuanced understanding of the

memory landscape despite only interviewing those who belong to civil society. Having explored the broader memory framework, I would then transition into questions about the specific case study or studies that the given participant could speak to. I explored how they perceive the memorialization effort(s), paying attention to the message communicated through the memorialization effort, its perceived inclusivity on an ethnic basis, and impact for peace and reconciliation. I also asked about other examples in order to identify potential additional case studies, and many times the research participants would reference a case study that I already included in my research. This most often happened with the War Childhood Museum, which all research participants had heard about. In the cases where I interviewed participants who themselves worked on some of the memorialization efforts that I study, I slightly adjusted the questions to focus more on their intentions behind the memorialization efforts and the process from conceptualizing to bringing the projects to life. These questions, in particular, supported me in accessing information about memorialization efforts which are neglected in the academic literature by relying on local sources who are directly involved. The full list of the interview questions is available in the Appendix.

In addition to slight differences in interview questions, the format and the language of the interviews varied too. I started data collection in March 2020, when I lived in Belgrade on a study away program. I conducted the interviews with representatives of civil society organizations in Serbia in-person in the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (B/C/S) language. Soon after, I had to leave Serbia due to COVID-19. My next three interviews, with representatives from the War Childhood Museum, the Post-Conflict Research Center, and Forum ZFD took place virtually, also in B/C/S. Having decided to build on the original

research project, I conducted additional interviews during the summer of 2020 when I lived in my hometown of Mostar. Considering the rather safe COVID-19 conditions in Mostar in June 2020, I was able to conduct the interview with representatives of the Mostar Youth Theater in person, in B/C/S, while following COVID-19 precautions. When it comes to the interviews with research participants from Kosovo, I conducted these virtually in English. My final two interviews, with research participants from Prijedor in Bosnia and Herzegovina I conducted virtually in B/C/S.

My choices regarding language deserve some reflection. I conducted the first three interviews as part of the Guided Self Instruction course in Serbian, designed to accommodate my needs as a native speaker on a study away program which includes a language course. As such, these interviews had to be in B/C/S. While I had more freedom to conduct the remaining interviews with research participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina in English (although not in the case of all research participants due to their language skills), my study away research advisor and I agreed that it would be more appropriate to continue with data collection in B/C/S as our shared native language, especially considering that the content of the interviews dealt with how our society deals with memory and case studies that are based in the societies where the language is spoken. Having conducted these interviews in B/C/S, I translated all the quotes I include in the paper. I acknowledge that the translation implies a departure from the original meaning that the participants communicated; however, I believe that my bilingual skills, as a native B/C/S speaker pursuing education in English, support me in translating their quotes in a way that preserves the original meaning. The same approach could not work with the research participants from Kosovo as I do not speak Albanian. There is a possibility that

those research participants from Kosovo speak B/C/S, but I did not even entertain that option, even if it would contribute to methodological consistency, since I felt that suggesting to do the interview in B/C/S would be inappropriate considering the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo. Instead, I found it more appropriate to conduct the interview in English, as a second language that we all use.

Similarly, I want to reflect on my decisions regarding the format of the interviews. In order to keep everyone involved in the research safe, I only conducted in-person interviews in Belgrade and Mostar when we collectively agreed upon the format of the interview considering COVID-19 related risks. In this context, I could not travel within Bosnia and Herzegovina (to Sarajevo) and beyond (Kosovo), so the remaining interviews were conducted virtually. Of course, this format posed certain challenges. While we strived to keep the cameras on for most of the interview, some interviews were audio-only for parts of the interview or its entirety due to internet connectivity issues. Luckily, during the first portion of the interviews, I only conducted phone-call only interviews with the two research participants I had met before, during my internship in Sarajevo, which made building rapport easier. The last two interviews that I conducted did not include video; however, at that point in the pandemic (September 2020), I believe that we had all gotten used to working virtually and the distance that exists in the virtual space was not as pronounced. While I would have likely chosen to conduct all interviews in person had it been safe for us to do so, I did not feel as though there was a significant difference between the interviews I conducted in person and virtually, nor did I encounter challenges with establishing rapport online. This was likely facilitated by the fact that the research

participants themselves have gotten used to working online and we all had a lot of patience and understanding for any technological challenges.

I also came across a challenge during my in-person interview with the Mostar Youth Theater team, though I did not feel as though it had a significant impact on my data collection. I established contact with the director of the theater and have communicated my interest in interviewing an actor involved in the play in addition to him. However, there was a misunderstanding, and the director showed up to the interview accompanied by an actress that was willing to participate in the research. While I would have preferred to interview the two of them separately, I considered it disrespectful to ask the actress to leave when she had already volunteered her time to participate in my research project. As we started the interview, it was clear to me that this was a good decision since I perceived the Mostar Youth Theater team as very close and collaborative. While I will never know for certain, my sense was that my findings would not be significantly different had I interviewed them separately: there seemed to be a lot of trust between the director and the actress, which made it easy to express their opinions freely in front of one another. Interviewing two people at the same time was a challenge for me as a researcher, but I have luckily already prepared questions for both of them, and I tried to create the space to hear from both. Overall, while I had not planned to interview the two of them at the same time, I felt as though this format did not take away from my findings. I am glad I made the decision that I did out of respect for the research participants.

In addition to this example, I reflect on other ethical considerations in the research process. Considering that my research project deals with the topic of armed conflicts, and even more specifically, the experiences of children in armed conflicts, I find it important

to acknowledge the sensitivity of the matter at hand. However, considering that all research participants, as members of civil society organizations, engage with the past, and many of them specifically the memory of children in war, I did not expect that the participation in the research would expose them to traumatic material in a way that goes beyond what they deal with on a daily basis. Nevertheless, I made a point to acknowledge the sensitivity of the material when going over the consent form at the beginning of each interview, explicitly linking their right to stop the interview at any point to potential needs arising from the sensitivity of the material. I also put in additional effort to make sure that the research participants are providing informed consent for their participation. I reminded them verbally that the consent form asks that they tell me if they do not want to be recorded and only started recording after they gave me verbal consent in addition to the consent form. It was also important for me to make sure that they understood the research before I started and I offered them opportunities to ask additional questions about the research at numerous points, be it while we were still deciding the time of the interview via email, or again before I posed the first question during the interview. One of the participants requested additional information and a brief list of questions before the interview and I sent them to her. I also informed the participants at the end of the interview that they may reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

The sensitivity of the research topic deserves additional attention considering my transnational approach and my own positionality. As explained in the literature review, all three countries approach the memory of the war in a deeply ethnicized way. At the same time, I interviewed actors from different countries and various ethnic communities. I find it important to acknowledge my positionality in this context. All research participants knew

that I am from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I assume most of them, except those from Kosovo, could tell based on how I speak that I was socialized in a Bosnian Croat context. Those from Kosovo probably perceived me as being from Bosnia and Herzegovina more broadly. Being affiliated with the Bosnian Croat group could affect the level of trust between me and my research participants. While I did not inquire about how they personally identify, based on their names, the research participants from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina would be perceived as Serbs or Bosniaks. However, I did not feel as though our affiliation with different ethnic groups in this post-war context got in the way of establishing trust. Instead, I believe that our affiliation with civil society and transitional justice values implied that our approaches to the past oppose the ethnonational narratives of victimization that dominate the official politics. The fact that I was interested in studying memorialization efforts in different countries, and that I paid particular attention to their contributions to peace and reconciliation helped communicate to research participants how I approach the past. Further, my affiliation with different institutions and individuals made it easier for research participants to trust me. Through my involvement in the SIT Peace and Conflict Studies program, I established connections with civil society organizations in Serbia and Kosovo. My former internship experience with the Post-Conflict Research Center helped me connect with some of the research participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, while my research advisor helped me make other connections. In that sense, I had other individuals and groups vouching for me, which I believe made the research participants more comfortable with interviewing.

Apart from my perceived ethnic identity, my 'localness', but also education abroad, factor into my positionality. As explained above, my perception is that the ethnic and

national identities of those involved in the research, including myself, did not pose challenges for my research. Instead, there was more of a shared approach to memory. We also have the shared identity of being locals in the Western Balkans. I believe that this aspect of my identity contributed to building trust in a way that would be different for researchers from a different region. However, this shared experience meant that the participants would not explain their opinions in detail assuming that I understand, so I made sure to pose more questions in efforts to accurately recount their perspective. My “localness” also helped me ensure that I engage in culturally appropriate behavior, such as in the example with the Mostar Youth Theater that I outlined above. At the same time, I was transparent about my education at a liberal arts college in the United States. On one hand, studying abroad makes me appear more impartial, helping further alleviate potential concerns about a bias coming out of a Bosnian Croat context in which I grew up. At the same time, the United States played a role in the conflict, and the NATO bombing of Serbia contributes to a strong anti-U.S. American sentiment. I found it important to acknowledge this as I entered interviews with research participants from Serbia; however, their identity as civil society representatives distanced them from the dominant narratives that establish a perpetrator-victim binary between NATO and Serbia. Hence, I did not perceive any animosity related to my education in the United States. Having discussed my methodology, I now turn to presenting and analyzing the findings from these interviews.

Dominant Approaches to Memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo

How does memorialization of children in war fit within the dominant narratives of the conflict(s) in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo? The literature review helped define these dominant approaches as narratives of victimization, whereby ethnonational communities emphasize their victimhood and neglect, or even deny, the victimhood of others. If there were no victims among those who belong to other ethnic groups, the criminal responsibility of one's own compatriots and the government is almost impossible to conceptualize. I seek to complement the academic literature about the dominant narratives in these societies with my research participants' perspectives, as local actors involved in transitional justice and memorialization efforts. Then, I turn to examples of memorializing children in war in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina which exist within these dominant narratives. In fact, I argue, choosing to remember children as one of the most innocent and vulnerable groups strengthens the claims to victimhood, thereby consolidating the dominant narratives related to the war. I explore three monuments: the monument to children killed in NATO bombing in Belgrade, Serbia, and two monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one dedicated to children killed in Sarajevo and the other in East Sarajevo, as examples of memorials that support the dominant narratives. To explain how these monuments support the dominant narratives of victimization, I consider their exclusive approach with respect to the victims' ethnic identity. Building on Clark's observation (2018) about the politicization of memory, I consider what role remembering

children plays in the consolidation of victimhood narratives. I also note the exaggerated numbers of victims associated with these monuments which help strengthen the claims to victimhood. Finally, I unpack my research participants' commentary and opposition to such an approach to memorialization.

Memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo: Civil Society's View

When speaking about memorialization in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo more broadly, research participants reiterate academic perspectives, according to which memorialization efforts emphasize the victimhood of one's own ethnic group. Speaking about memory in Serbia, Marija states that "memory is first and foremost one sided, in the sense that we only remember the victims from our group, that is to say Serbian victims". She explains that the state commemorates Serbian victims of the NATO bombing and Operation Storm. Sofija from Bosnia and Herzegovina backs up the academic literature too, stating that the Bosnian "society remembers the war in a divided way, in the same way that our society is divided by the Dayton [Peace] Agreement according to ethnic groups". Luka further clarifies by pointing out that "there are three dominant politics of memory which are ethnonational and completely exclusive - it's always the same story: our victims, their perpetrators". Nikola from Serbia also connects the emphasis on one's own victimhood to blaming the other. Talking about the official culture of memory in Serbia, he notes "two key points: one talks about the suffering, or violence against one community, that is the Serbian nation, and on the other hand, (...) finding the culprit in other nationalisms or some other actions by the international community". In Kosovo too,

memory is ethnically exclusive. Nita states that “when we are talking about victims and survivors, I am speaking about Albanian victims and survivors because other communities (...) are not even regarded as victims and survivors”. This description sheds light on the ways in which emphasizing the victimhood of one’s own group brings with it the neglect of other groups victimhood, and with that, an avoidance of responsibility.

Conversations with research participants provide additional insights regarding the memorialization efforts in their countries which are not as explicitly mentioned in academic literature. Participants from Serbia point out the forgetting, denial and even systemic erasure that goes hand in hand with the focus on Serbian victimhood. While Nikola states that “there is an attempt to forget as much as possible”, Zoran identifies the state’s approach to memory as a “systemic, ideological, and political erasure”, which builds on the “official Serbian politics under Milošević under which Serbia officially was not at war”. This state politics implies “denying the participation [in war] and denying the crimes themselves” and “it is conducted through institutions, such as education”. He illustrates what this means by explaining that the period of the ‘90s in Serbia invokes memory of hyperinflation as a result of the UN economic sanctions, and the NATO bombing, without reference to why those happened, or why the international community applied economic and military measures against Serbia. On the other hand, Sara from Bosnia and Herzegovina explains that this kind of erasure is impossible in her society, where “war is still an omni-present topic in our society because we are still living the consequences of the war”. She also brings to focus another facet of memorialization, which she observes in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia: celebrating war crimes. When speaking about denial and the negation of facts related to the war, she notes “the celebration of those people

[convicted war criminals]” and “the rehabilitation of people who committed war crimes, their involvement in political life”. While the research participants describe the victimhood narratives, which are recorded in academic literature, they bring to light additional layers, including systemic erasure of war crimes and celebration of war criminals.

Research participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular, speak about the political purpose of memorialization for state officials. When describing the state’s approach to remembering the past, Sofija explains that the official narratives of the past “unfortunately depend upon the personal profit for the ruling politicians”, implying that the narratives related to the past serve a particular purpose for the state officials. She provides more context, explaining how for the politicians after the war, “the easiest path was to divide people (...), to continue deepening those divisive narratives among us and them since that gives them more control”. To explain how this division benefits them, she provides a specific example: if someone wanted to prosecute a Bosniak politician for corruption, the politician could say “that’s them, that’s not our court”, and a Bosnian Serb politician could do the same. Through this example, she seeks to explain how the division of society on an ethnic basis protects state officials. She connects this back to narratives relating to the past by claiming that “this is really what all of those narratives are used for, and particularly the victims’ narratives: gaining political points and votes considering that, unfortunately, this is the easiest path for winning”. Luka seems to agree with Sofija. He claims that “the basic principle for coming to power and keeping power is nationalism (...) and memory politics regarding the past war”. I consider their discussion of the relationship between divisive narratives of the past and politicians’ benefits particularly helpful for further deepening Clark’s (2018) claims about the politicization of memory. Combining their insights helps

me pay attention, in my analysis, to the ways in which the ethnicized narratives serve politicians.

In contrast to the official state narratives, the research participants also point out the work of civil society, to which they belong. Zoran explains that civil society in Serbia “actively deals with what is oftentimes called dealing with the past or transitional justice”, in contrast to state erasure which he identifies. He points out that, initially, the work of civil society focused on criminal and legal proceedings through research, reporting, and provision of psychological support to the witnesses in courts. Marija notes that “in the last years, the work on memory intensified”, and it includes “different methods, such as exhibitions, debates, plays, (...) even documentaries”. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where memory is so divided across ethnic groups, Sofija shares how within civil society, “at least we all rely on the same facts” determined by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia or the court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, indicating an approach contrary to the divisive narratives. Sara points out the work of civil society in Prijedor, which I explore later on in this paper, as a positive example for its ethnically inclusive approach. Marta from Kosovo speaks about civil society’s work similarly: she points out that “a lot of the activities that took place within these 20 years from the civil society should have been work from the state”, such as “documenting and informing people about what happened in the war”, specifically in regard to neglected groups such as victims of sexual violence and missing persons. Similarly to Serbia, civil society in Kosovo takes on the role of remembering the past, and makes a point to include the groups that the state neglects, as seen in Berisha’s work (2017). At the same time, Marta highlights that “civil society has really introduced the importance of inclusive memory”, not just with regards to categories

of victims, but their ethnic identity too. In that sense, she claims that civil society does “not push for one side of the story”, and similarly to their colleagues from Bosnia and Herzegovina, aim to work “based on the facts”. These first-hand accounts from members of civil society in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo shed light on their memorialization work that defies the state’s approach through its emphasis on dealing with the past in an inclusive way and with a factual basis.

At the same time, critical approaches to the work of civil society show up in my research too. Luka criticizes civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina for being “insufficiently political”, pointing out that their work implies “seminars for young peoples, education, mostly conferences, round tables, meaning things that are done in a closed space and imply working with a very, very limited number of people”. He believes that such activities do not adequately address “the imposition of memory politics, culture of memory by institutions and politicians” in the aforementioned ethnically divisive manner. He further notes that “donor politics” influence civil society work, with their “stories about reconciliation, which is nonsense (*ubleha*) – what does reconciliation mean here?” He clarifies his dissatisfaction with the donor's emphasis on reconciliation by pointing out that for him, “there is no reconciliation without dealing with the past, without clarifying what happened here, and of course, establishing adequate mechanisms for remembering”. In other words, he is dissatisfied with the state’s approach to memorialization and the donors’ push for reconciliation, which insufficiently addresses the state’s limitations. In that context, he wishes for civil society to better challenge the state’s approach to memorialization – to be more political. In the next sections, I turn to memorialization

efforts that focus on children in war and explore the ways in which they support or challenge the dominant narratives.

Monument to children killed in NATO bombing (Belgrade, Serbia)

The monument in Belgrade, Serbia, more precisely, Tašmajdan Park, a central location in the city, commemorates children killed during the NATO bombing of Serbia. The monument includes large inscriptions, in Serbian and English, which state “we were just children”. These inscriptions are written on wing-like blocks that surround a statue of a little girl, giving her an appearance of an angel. While it is not written anywhere on the monument itself, it is known that the little girl symbolizes Milica Rakić. As a 4-year-old, Milica died in 1999 in the NATO bombing of Serbia, alongside five other persons from her neighborhood of Batajnica (“Potresan natpis”, 2019). Based on the findings of the Humanitarian Law Center, an additional 25 Serbian children were killed in the NATO bombing, as well as 65 Albanian Children (Humanitarian Law Center, n.d.). Coincidentally, Milica was killed in the same neighborhood which concealed eight mass graves with 744 bodies of Kosovo Albanians, whom the Serbian forces murdered in Kosovo, and afterwards re-buried in Serbia (“Tajne Masovne Grobnice u Srbiji,” 2020)¹. Underneath Milica’s statue, the smaller-sized text, also in Serbian and English, claims that the monument is “dedicated to the children killed in NATO aggression”, despite featuring the image of a single girl.

¹ I wanted to provide more information about this source. It is a website called “War in Serbia”, made by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia, which documents examples of the war that took place in Serbia, such as the existence of the mass graves, to counter the narrative that Serbia was not at war.



Figure 1. Gvozdić, A. (2020). The Monument to Children Killed in NATO Bombing.

Another implicit message of the monument in Belgrade is that it commemorates only Serbian children, revealing its exclusive approach to memorialization. Even though the monument does not use the term “Serbian”, it commemorates children killed in NATO bombing, which Fridman (2016) described as an important event for the development of the Serbian victimhood narrative. The focus on Serbian children connects to previous literature about the issue of inclusivity in memorialization of children in conflict, albeit in the context of Colombia (Reyes 2019). While in that context the exclusivity is based on the perception of children’s innocence according to their behavior, the monument in Belgrade is exclusive based on ethnic identity. Participants in this study who are from Serbia, comment on the ethnically exclusive nature of the monument. Marija pointed out that:

In Batajnica, a mass grave was found where 75 Kosovar children were buried, not buried but thrown away. This is also a kind of link, and it happened in the same time period, during the NATO intervention, but we don't see that here [in the monument], we see only Milica.

Marija criticizes the monument to children who died during the NATO intervention for excluding the Kosovo Albanian children, especially considering that they died during the same time period and their bodies were buried in the same location. Zoran reiterated this point, adding that he finds it hypocritical and that it hurts him a lot. Marija extended the criticism of the monument's exclusivity to other ethnic groups too:

If we only put Milica, and we don't put Blerim [Albanian name] or Ahmed [Bosniak name] or, I don't know, Igor from Croatia, we are sending a message that we only care about Serb children, that only Serb future matters to us, and not the future of other countries.

While the monument in Colombia excludes “those marginal young people caught in violent drug, paramilitary, or guerilla wars” (Reyes, 2019, p. 4), the monument in Serbia excludes children who are not of Serb ethnicity by commemorating only those who died at the hands of NATO.

Despite its exclusion of non-Serbian children, the monument does symbolize more than just Milica, who serves as a metonym for Serbian suffering in NATO bombing. Zoran summarizes the official culture of memory in Serbia through the following two features:

one talks about the suffering, or violence against (...) the Serb people; and on the other hand, from that defeat, the defeat of nationalist politics of Serbia as a former republic in Yugoslavia, [comes] the placing of blame on other nationalistic behavior or other actions of the international community.

Describing the dominant narratives of the past in Serbia, Zoran emphasizes the victimhood of the Serbs and the simultaneous shifting of blame onto other actors, such as NATO. The memory of Milica plays an important role within this narrative. Previous literature pointed out that “Milica became a symbol for all the innocent civilian victims of NATO bombing”,

indicating that she represents not just all children who died in NATO bombing, but victims of adult age too (Mandić, 2016, p. 465). Marija explained that “she is a motif which is used when talking about NATO bombing as an example of a soulless killing of a people”. Nikola agreed, pointing out that “when talking about NATO bombing, an example that is used so much that it is unbelievable is the story about Milica Rakić”. All of these points communicate the idea that the death of Milica Rakić does not symbolize the death of a single child but the deaths of all innocent Serbs at the hands of NATO. In that sense, she is “a metonym for wider suffering”, whereby a child “stands in” for many deaths, just as Lury (2010, p. 107) noted for children in films about war.

This ethnically exclusive monument strengthens the dominant narrative of the past in Serbia – the victimization narrative. Marija states that:

the message [of the monument] is, or what I read from it, is that this was an unjust aggression (...) but behind that you do not see what happened during the so-called aggression – we call it NATO intervention – that during the period of NATO bombing the largest number of crimes was committed against the Kosovo Albanians.

Hence, the monument strengthens both strands of the victimization narrative – the suffering of the Serbs at the hands of NATO and the omission of crimes in Kosovo orchestrated by the Serbian government. Nikola describes such a memorialization process as “frozen”, claiming that the Serbian society cut the period of NATO bombing “out of context, took that one part and said: ‘Here you go! Here you can see a man with crutches, let’s find the culprit!’”. Nita from Kosovo makes a similar observation: while she acknowledges that “NATO did kill people and civilians” she claims that “it is really unfair to portray NATO as the aggressor, as the one who introduced (*sic*) in our state affairs when you had massacres and genocide happening all around the Balkans”, emphasizing the context in

which NATO intervened. Remembering the death of this child serves the purpose of emphasizing one moment from the conflict, which helps support the perception of Serbs as victims and NATO as the aggressor.

The strengthening of the dominant narratives through this monument also comes from its politicized nature, which my participants interpret as the manipulation of her story. Even though it was not state officials, but a pro-state media outlet, who erected the monument, Marija explains how the state capitalized on the monument for its purposes. In 2015, the state officials decided to have “massive political commemorations of the start of NATO bombing in Serbia” and they refurbished the monument which had been damaged for a few years up until that point. Commenting on the role this monument plays in those state commemorations, Zoran claimed that “unfortunately, the children who suffered during NATO bombing are being misused and the tragedy of their families is being manipulated”. He elaborates that “there is a manipulation of the suffering of children for the creation of a narrative about the eternal victimhood of the Serb nation”. Sara from Bosnia and Herzegovina echoes such interpretation of this monument when saying that:

the message [of the monument] is to make it clear that this is some kind of aggression and maybe, I would even say, in a certain moment that there is a use of children for exactly that purpose especially with the visual, conceptual design of the monument with the statue of the girl.

In this monument, the participants recognize a disingenuous emphasis on children’s experiences with the aim of portraying NATO as the aggressor and Serbs as victims, which they identify as manipulation of Milica’s individual story. I connect such manipulation to Clark’s (2016) argument about the politicization of memory, whereby “political interests shape and influence memorial practices” (p. 1200). I argue that the “use of children”, particularly within state-led commemoration efforts, implies that political interests shape

and influence memorialization with the aim of consolidating the image of Serbian victimhood. In that sense, to understand how this monument supports the victimization narrative, it is important to pay attention to its politicized purpose in addition to the ethnically exclusive nature. In the next section, I explore how similar monuments in neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina factor into the dominant narratives of the conflict in that country.

Monuments to children killed in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are two monuments dedicated to children, which are close to one another: in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo. With the Dayton Peace Agreement, Sarajevo was divided along the former siege line into the City of Sarajevo, with a predominantly Bosniak population, and the City of East Sarajevo, formerly referred to as the Serb Sarajevo (Ristic, 2018). A monument entitled “the memorial to the murdered children of besieged Sarajevo 1992-1995” (Figure 2) is located in front of the Great Park in the City of Sarajevo, a central location near one of the busiest streets (Ristic, 2018). The monument consists of two parts: a circular base with a glass sculpture and seven columns on the western edge of the park. Relatives of the murdered children collaborated with the artist to create the base using molten bullets fired during the war, in which they imprinted their feet. The glass sculpture includes a taller figure leaning over the smaller one, symbolizing a mother protecting a child. The seven columns contain the names of the children who were killed. (Ristic, 2018). In East Sarajevo, there is “a monument to the children killed in Serb Sarajevo”. The monument includes a large, metal dove on top of a block on which there is a poem “Twilight” by Goran Vračar which speaks about a community suffering an attack during which children died too. Public commemorations

tied to this monument reveal that it is dedicated to 120 children who were killed in the then-Serb Sarajevo, according to the information collected by the Center for the Investigation of War, War Crimes, and the Search for Missing Persons from the Republika Srpska (Milidrag, 2018). In this context, similarly to the monument in Belgrade, it is safe to say that this monument intends to commemorate only Serbian children.

On the other hand, the exclusivity on the basis of ethnicity with respect to the monument in the City of Sarajevo is contested; nonetheless, it fits within the larger narratives of victimization. While the monument was initially meant to be called the monument to the murdered children of Sarajevo, representatives of the parents, supported by a Bosniak party (SDA, the Party of Democratic Action) changed the title to the murdered children of *besieged* Sarajevo. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) was against this change, arguing that there were “innocent Serbian children” murdered by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina members, who are excluded in this way. However, the SDA claimed that such an approach “would mean equalizing the victim and the aggressor” (Ristic, 2018, p. 191). In that sense, the inclusion of the term *besieged* in the title of the monument served the purpose of maintaining a clear distinction between Serbs as aggressors, and Bosniaks as victims. However, Ristic (2018) claims that “it would be inaccurate to argue that the monument thus operates as a tool for ethnic exclusion as its seven columns list the names of all ethnicities who were killed during the war” (p. 191). Instead, she argues that including the term *besieged* in the title of the monument “indicates that, at the time of its construction, the city was not yet ready to deal with the memory of its own perpetrators” (Ristic, 2018, p. 191). In summary, the inclusion of this term serves to distinguish between victims and perpetrators on an ethnic basis, while the actual names that are part of the monument reflect

a more multi-ethnic understanding of victims. Within the victimization narratives, I view an ethnically coded understanding of victims and perpetrators as two sides of the same coin. Even though the inclusivity of the monument is contested, its naming puts forth an ethnicized view of perpetrators, which is why I consider this example within the dominant narratives of victimhood.

My conversations with civil society actors equally represent different interpretations regarding the exclusivity of this monument. Vedad states that the official name of the monument “reduces the monument to national, in other words, Bosniak [meaning]”. Hence, this monument is an ethnically exclusive one despite containing names of non-Bosniak children. Sofija claims that “from the perspective of Republika Srpska, this monument is dedicated to only one category, ‘their’ [Bosniak] victims”. She draws our attention to the way in which Bosnian Serbs perceive the monument, arguing that although it does contain names of Serb children, the title contributes to the Bosnian Serb perception of the monument as one for merely Bosniak victims. Bosnian Serb officials’ decision to erect their own monument to children in East Sarajevo seems to confirm the argument that they feel as though their constituents are not represented in the monument. While these two participants side more with the perception that the monument is ethnically exclusive, or at least perceived as such by the Bosnian Serbs, other participants do not express strong opinions. Sara only mentions the following:

I know that there was some problem about the names of the children because there were only children of besieged Sarajevo, and not children of the entire Sarajevo (...). I know that there were, let’s say, many negative reactions in civil society, but I am really not familiar with it.

Amela does not at all mention the ethnic representation related to this monument when asked about it. While this monument's inclusivity is clearly ambiguous, I once again shift attention to politicization of memorialization to examine how remembering the children in Sarajevo plays into the dominant narratives of the wars.

The existence of two monuments to children in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo exemplify the competitive approach to memorialization, which is characteristic of Bosnia's politicized memory. As explained previously, each group in Bosnia and Herzegovina presents their own ethnic truth (Barkan & Bećirbašić, 2015). Sofija describes this when saying "the way our society remembers the past is divided, in the way the Dayton Agreement divided our society according to ethnic groups, that's approximately how we remember the war". Studying the three different narratives, Sokol (2014) points out the emergence of oppositional memorials. She presents an example: a memorial complex in Kravica (Republika Srpska) dedicated to Serb victims of the Second World War and the war of the 1990s. This memorial is located near Srebrenica, and its commemoration is held the day after the Srebrenica one (Sokol 2014). The physical and temporal proximity of these commemorations illustrate the ways in which the memorial in Kravica seeks to elevate examples of Serbian victimhood against the memory of Srebrenica, as the most prominent example of Bosniak suffering in the war. In that sense, Sokol (2014) names the Kravica memorial complex an oppositional memorial. I build on her research to claim that the establishment of the monument to children from East Sarajevo in response to the monument to the children of besieged Sarajevo represents another oppositional monument. As explained above, regardless of the actual inclusivity of the monument in Sarajevo, the Bosnian Serb perception is that their victims are not represented. Hence, the monument in

East Sarajevo, as an example of an oppositional memorial, helps illustrate the ways in which the memory of children serves the purpose of asserting one's victimhood in response to another's claim on victimhood within the competing victimization narratives. As such, this example points out the politicization of children's memories, whereby their memorialization serves to consolidate narratives of victimhood put forward by state officials.

Furthermore, both monuments in Sarajevo and Belgrade rely on exaggerated numbers of victims to contribute to the victimization narrative. Commenting on the monument in Belgrade, Zoran says: "one of my reservations is that (...) in building the narrative about the dying in NATO bombing, false information and false data is used (...) Serbia is, we could say, a champion in the region in exaggerating the numbers of victims". He points out that the "Humanitarian Law Center established the exact number of victims in NATO bombing (...) which is 754, but you will see every March when the anniversary of NATO bombing is commemorated, you have a range of 2500 to 4500 victims". Commenting on the monument to children killed in NATO bombing, who symbolize the deaths of all innocent victims in Serbia, the participant expresses his frustration with the inaccurate information spread in the public about the total numbers of deaths in NATO bombing. Specifically regarding the number of children, I found information about 25 Serbian children killed in NATO bombing based on the database created by the Humanitarian Law Center; however, a newspaper article from Serbia referenced the death of 79 children in NATO bombing ("Venci na spomenik Milici Rakić", 2019). The monument to children in Sarajevo faces such criticism too. Puhalo (n.d.) points out that news stories about that monument include the information that there were 1600 child

victims. The monument includes the names of 502 children, while the remaining were meant to be engraved at a later date (Ristić, 2018). However, research centers do not seem to indicate that there are 1100 more names to be added. A research center tied to the University of Sarajevo documented 524 child victims (Čekić et al., 2010). The research of the NGO Research and Documentation Center, on the other hand, documented 711 child victims, among these 614 civilians and 97 soldiers (Puhalo, n.d.). Given these findings, the broadly accepted number of 1600 deaths seems unfounded. In other words, both countries rely on exaggerated numbers of victims related to the events that these monuments commemorate, pointing out additional ways in which these monuments indirectly serve to strengthen the victimhood narratives.

Having commented on these monuments, all participants voice strong opposition to ethnically exclusive memorialization. Bothered by the exclusion of Albanian and other children from the monument in Belgrade, Zoran points out that “in my opinion it would be a lot better (...) to build an inclusive monument, and that means for all children who suffered in the wars in the former Yugoslavia”. Marija mentions that she thinks “this monument would be much better, much more effective if Milica were there with her friends, with all of the friends she would have met had it not been for the war”. She goes on to say that “the memory of child suffering should be inclusive, and include the memory of suffering of all children, and not just our children. Not just Milica, but all other children who are part of the Serb, Bosniak, Albanian, Croatian people, all people”. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sofija laments the lack of inclusive monuments. She states that “unfortunately, there isn’t a united memorial, not in a sense [that it is] for all children who died”. She does say that “this is something that has been talked about for a long time. There

are victims' associations who are talking about a possible monument for children (...) which would unite all, without ethnic or national specifications". On a similar note, Sara mentions "an initiative to build a monument for children who were murdered in Prijedor during the war, which does not carry an ethnic prefix, does not [specify] to which ethnic group the children belonged (...) That is a positive example for me". In these statements, participants indicate their support for ethnically inclusive monuments in line with McDowell and Braniff's (2014) suggestions for inclusive memorialization. In the next section, I explore examples that oppose the victimization narratives.

Alternative Approaches to Memorializing Children in War

Various civil society organizations in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo challenge the dominant narratives of conflict through the memorialization of children. In this section, I present the work of the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; the exhibition ‘Once Upon a Time and Never Again’, organized by an NGO the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo; a theater production ‘A Lullaby to Mladenka’ by the Mostar Youth Theater; and finally, the initiative *Jer me se tiče* in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which aims to erect a monument to children in Prijedor. Analyzing these examples, I point out the ways in which they challenge the dominant narratives of victimization either by memorializing in an ethnically inclusive, universal way; by memorializing victims of an “opposite” ethnic group; or through a combination of the two. I argue that once again, the social construction of children as innocent and vulnerable serves these civil society actors in challenging the dominant narratives through the memorialization initiatives focused on children. I will start by outlining the approaches to memorialization in the different examples and explain the ways in which they challenge the dominant narratives, but also encounter obstacles in doing so.

War Childhood Museum (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

In contrast to the aforementioned examples, the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo documents the experiences of children in war without emphasis on the children’s ethnic identities. In 2010 the founder of the museum, Jasminko Halilović, started collecting brief testimonies from people who were children during the war in Bosnia and

Herzegovina. He compiled the information in a book, but later realized there was enough interest and material to create a museum (Takševa, 2018). The Museum staff collaborated with individuals who survived war during their childhood to collect personal stories and belongings which make up the Museum's permanent exhibition. While they started with childhood experiences from the war in Sarajevo, Amela (museum employee) explains that soon after the museum set up mechanisms to collect stories from other parts of the country: opening research centers in other cities and developing a system to reimburse costs for those interested in coming to Sarajevo to share their experiences. The Museum grew beyond the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina: today, their collection includes "stories from the Second World War, Syrian Civil War, War in Afghanistan, War in Donbass, and other conflicts", and they aim to "create the world's largest collection dedicated to the experience of childhood affected by war" (*War Childhood Museum*, n.d.). Considering their inclusive approach within and beyond Bosnia's borders, Takševa (2018) highlights "the Museum's commitment to collect narratives about the war from those who have lived through it as children, irrespective of their ethnic belonging" (p. 4). The research participants perceive the Museum in such a way too. Sara stated that "there isn't an ethnic prefix and the museum is all-encompassing. It doesn't want to be, even though it is based in Sarajevo, it doesn't want to be Sarajevo-centric, but it deals with the experiences of all children from Bosnia and Herzegovina". From Amela's perspective, such an ethnically inclusive approach "was very natural, and it was not a matter of question at all".

Within this inclusive approach, the museum challenges the dominant narratives by providing a universal story. Takševa (2018) points out that "rather than focusing on the different ethnic groups and their interests during and since the war, the [War Childhood

Museum] collection highlights the common experience of growing up in war for all those affected by it” (p. 5). By doing so, the museum communicates that children of different ethnic groups have been affected by the war, in contrast to the perspectives which limit the experience of victimhood to a single ethnic group. Sara reiterates this point, stating that the museum “talks about the universality, I would say, of the children’s experience of war (...) regardless of where a conflict happens, the experiences are simply very, very similar”. However, I find it important to emphasize that Amela explained that “somehow it became very quickly clear how we all [children in war] remember that period in a different way and that we all experienced it differently for a variety of reasons”, adding an important nuance to the universal representation of war experience. Despite this nuance, the universal approach clearly goes against the dominant approaches of victimization. Sara stated that “it is absolutely not a principle that the museum promotes, that it needs to clearly state who the victim is, who is guilty, who is responsible, but it simply talks about that experience and why every war and conflict is wrong”. This indicates that the museum’s approach differs from the dominant narratives which emphasize the victimhood of one’s own ethnic group and blame the other. For this reason, Takševa (2018) argues that the museum’s approach “stands apart from official politics”, which imply “three versions of official memorialization of the recent war” (p. 4-5). Instead, the War Childhood Museum “testif[ies] to the existence of a more complex local perspective” and “offers a viable alternative”, by speaking “to past and current generations across and beyond ethnic divisions” (Takševa, 2018, p. 5).

While this approach awards them praise from outside bodies, challenging the dominant narrative comes at a cost. For the quality of their work, the museum received an

award from the Council of Europe, but very little support from the state. As Amela explained to me, they received no support while finding a place for a permanent location. Furthermore, they need to pay the full rent price, which is unusual for cultural institutions. Sara says: “in my opinion, the obvious reason why the museum is not supported by the authorities is because it does not do ... does not propagate the narrative of besieged Sarajevo, of only Bosniak victims, but deals with the universal experience of children in war”, calling such attitude towards the museum “devastating”. The dominant system also makes it hard for the museum to pursue their educational activities: Sofija shared “that it is very hard for them to go to Republika Srpska and work there with children, and gain access to work there in schools. Why? Because they come from Sarajevo and it is Jasminko and not some other name”, implying that he is associated with the Bosniak community, which impacts their access. In other words, while the museum is making great success in promoting an alternative way of remembering the past through the experiences of children regardless of their ethnicity, the context in which it operates is not supportive, and even creates barriers. Despite these obstacles, their work proves to be a source of inspiration for other organizations, including one in Kosovo.

‘Once Upon a Time and Never Again’ Exhibition (Prishtina, Kosovo)

The Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) Kosovo, a non-governmental organization focused on transitional justice in Kosovo, created an exhibition titled “Once Upon a Time and Never Again”. This exhibition commemorates the 1133 children killed or missing as a result of the war in Kosovo and contains about 40 items that family members contributed to the exhibition. Marta, an employee of the HLC Kosovo, explains that their “idea was to

make this exhibition to commemorate their [children's] lives" and they "wanted to shape it together with the families". Very soon they realized that many families unfortunately did not have many belongings that they could dedicate to the exhibition; however, "a very very small number of families actually managed to save some of the belongings and all of them were very very willing to cooperate". Jointly, they created an exhibition, which they conceptualize as a journey of consciousness for the visitors. Upon entering the exhibition, the first thing that visitors see is a 16 ft wall with the children's names as well as their dates of birth and death. According to Marta, this portion of the exhibition "gives you the chills to see how long that wall is" and it "gives you the general factual idea of how many lives were lost". The next step of the journey is a dark room where visitors get to listen to a personal story, which is both "a story of survival and a story of loss", meant to illustrate the different experiences. Finally, the visitors enter the main room that is entirely white, "almost as a heaven kind of place". This room contains items that the families donated, such a bicycle, a shirt or other everyday items. Within the visitors' journey, the main room takes them from the dark state of not knowing to more awareness, as they get to know the lives of these children in a more individualized, personalized manner.

The exhibition commemorates the children of different ethnicities. In the process of curating the exhibition, HLC engaged with both Albanian and Serbian families. When asked about the reasoning behind an ethnically inclusive approach to memorializing children in their exhibition, similarly to her colleagues from the War Childhood Museum, Marta is almost taken aback. She points out that "in the work of the HLC as an organization, the exhibition was not an exception: everything that we do is inclusive". In that sense, when choosing how to curate the exhibition, "these stories were, and always are, selected based

on the circumstances of how these people were killed first, but not on their nationality”, though of course the organization would “not like to not share the story of somebody based on their nationality”. This explanation of their thought process behind curating the exhibition points out just how important the principles of inclusivity are to their work, in contrast to the ethnically exclusive approaches.

The fact that they remember children in an ethnically inclusive way challenges the dominant narratives. Similarly to her colleagues in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nita explains that within the memory landscape in Kosovo, there is an emphasis on Albanian victims and survivors, while “other communities that are victims and survivors of the last war in Kosovo are not even regarded [as such]”. In this statement, we see how, similarly to the neighboring countries, Kosovo’s dominant memory politics focus on Albanian victimhood, while neglecting the victims and survivors that belong to other ethnic communities. At the same time, she also emphasized the ways in which “the biggest actors, who are the KLA (the Kosovo Liberation Army) and soldiers and commanders and veterans” occupy the central space in the memory landscape. In that context, the HLC exhibition not only challenges the victimization narrative by presenting child victims from different ethnic communities, but it also goes against a militarized memory that neglects the civilian casualties. As they were preparing the exhibition, Marta shares that the families “were all happy we were contacting them because of the children, because this never happened before”, pointing out the ways in which this group had been neglected in the past. At the same time, the HLC staff were apprehensive about their atypical approach to memorialization which included families from different communities. Marta explains how they thought “that maybe that would be offensive, or they would think that their children

should not be in the same room as the children of the enemy, but that did not happen at all. (...) Everybody said it shouldn't be any other way". Although inclusive memorialization of this kind is not frequent, it received widespread support from the families. In that sense, this exhibition challenged the dominant frames of memory by creating the space to memorialize a neglected group, child victims, and do so in an ethnically inclusive way.

'A Lullaby for Mladenka' Theater Performance (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Another approach that goes beyond the ethnonational victimization narratives arises when holding members of your own group accountable. The Mostar Youth Theater developed and performed a play "A Lullaby to Mladenka", which commemorates the death of a 4-year old Mladenka Zadro in Grabovica, among 33 other Bosnian Croat victims (Communications Service, ICTY, n.d.). The crime was committed by troops belonging to the majority-Bosniak Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The director of the play, Vedad, was himself a member of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He shares his response once he found out about the crime: "I found it horrific ... I mean those people took the same oath as I did", expressing his shock and disbelief at the treatment of civilians by those army members. When asked what motivated him to create a play that commemorates this crime, he shared a "simple reason", referring to a "folk wisdom saying that we should first sweep in front of our own door and then go to somebody else's". In other words, specifically because he was a member of the army that committed the crime not far away from where he lives, he found it important to engage with that case. He recalled often being asked where they found the courage to work on such a play and he most often replied by

saying that “courage is silence, how can they sleep?”, implying that not engaging with this topic would have been a harder thing to do. It is clear that he strongly believes in the importance of “sweeping in front of your own door”, because he also believes that members of the Croatian National Theater in Mostar should work on plays about the crimes in Vranica or Heliodrom (Bosnia and Herzegovina) committed by the Croatian Defense Council. While he identifies as a human, rather than a member of a specific ethnonational group, he acknowledges that society at large sorts him in the Bosniak group. Within such a view, this play exemplifies an interesting case for going beyond the ethnonational narratives of victimization, not by focusing on the victims in a universal, ethnically inclusive way, but by emphasizing the crimes committed by perpetrators that belong to your own group.

At the same time, the ethnically inclusive approach of the theater is apparent as well. The director proudly points out that the play cast is very diverse in terms of their ethno-national identities. Furthermore, the name of the theater venue itself reflects its ethnically inclusive approach, similar to that of the War Childhood Museum and the Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo. The plays take place at the “Memorial Scene 2532”, as a numerical reference to all the Mostarians who died in the war, civilians and soldiers alike. He finds it important to emphasize that the number refers to “all together”, as a way to implicitly point out that the number does not focus on any one ethnic group in particular. Apart from diversity associated with the theater itself, my conversation with the director reveals a very ethnically inclusive approach to remembering the past. The mere fact that the director calls on the Croatian theater in the city to engage with crimes committed by the Croatian Defense Council indicates a more comprehensive understanding of the events

of war which include atrocities on and by all sides. This universal, ethnically inclusive approach also finds its way into the aforementioned play, even when it focuses on just one crime. Katarina, one of the actresses, points out how “we were all victims from all sides”, stating that they created this play “because it is everyone’s story - it is not a story of just one nation. The same happened on all sides. All sides had victims, all sides had suffering and all those war crimes”. In that sense, although the story commemorates a particular crime, those involved in the production perceive it as a way to not just interrogate the behavior of their own group, as the director pointed out, but also engage with a single case in more detail to share a universal story in an effort to transcend the ethnonational narratives of conflict.

‘Jer me se tiče’ [Because it concerns me] (Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Such blurring of ethnonational lines shows up in memorialization efforts in Prijedor, led by the *Jer me se tiče* group. Starting in 1992, the Yugoslav National Army and the Bosnian Serb forces attacked Prijedor and the surrounding areas in the north-western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, killing 3173 Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats, among which were 102 children (Medić, 2019). In response to these crimes, the *Jer me se tiče* Initiative worked on many projects to raise awareness about the crimes that occurred with the ultimate goal of establishing a monument to children in Prijedor. In their approach to memorialization, they seek ways to “escape the ethnonational politicization” of memory, according to Luka. One of their projects was a video “Remember the killed children”, which features young people from Prijedor, who upon introducing themselves, each state that they wish to remember a child from Prijedor who had been killed. Their videos are interjected by text providing the context and inviting the audience to join them in

remembering children killed in war regardless of their ethnicity and nationality. The young people featured in the video establish a kind of personal connection with the children they are remembering: some point out that they were born in the same year and could have been friends had it not been for the war; others draw a parallel between the age of the children when they were killed and their own family members. When I first watched the video, I noticed that the young people in the video remembered the children who, based on their names, would be associated with a different ethnic group. When I asked Luka why that was the case, he explained the group hoped to achieve a “manipulation of the perceived identities based on the name and where you come from, but to avoid that, to confuse the nations, which will relativize them. It was our attempt to escape the monoethnic patterns, the monoethnic politics of memory”. In this example too, we see the efforts to go beyond the ethnonational memorialization through a universal, ethnically inclusive approach, but also one that includes specifically remembering the victims that do not belong to the group that the society at large would identify you with (regardless of how you identify yourself), based on your name and location.

The initiative *Jer me se tiče* faced challenges in their pursuits to commemorate the victims in Prijedor in a way that differs from the mainstream approaches. The group has been negotiating with various community stakeholders to erect a monument to children killed in Prijedor. Although the majority of the victims are of Bosniak ethnicity, as explained previously, the group wanted to go beyond the ethnonational approaches to memorialization. In this process, they encountered barriers from both the local government, dominated by the Bosnian Serbs considering Prijedor’s location in the Republika Srpska, but also representatives of the Bosniak victims’ associations. Luka explained how within

these associations “certain members have that nationalist approach” and accuse the group of “relativizing the crimes because you do not want to say that Serbs killed Bosniaks, that Serbs committed a genocide against Bosniaks”. He claims that for these individuals, such a view of the events is “the only truth” and that for them, “there is no compromise”. Omar states how a Bosniak representative in the local government “obstructed their efforts” even though he represented the Social Democratic Party, “a citizens’ party”, as opposed to an ethnonational party. He attempts to guess why this politician behaved in such a way, assuming that their initiative “did not fit his interest or [those of] the Serbian majority who elected him, asked that of him”. Of course, he was not the only local politician opposed to the idea. Luka explains how the local government wanted to create a joint monument, meaning one that would not commemorate just the victims from the ‘90s, who are predominantly Bosniak. They offered different suggestions: to create a monument commemorating all children who died in the 20th century (including World War I, World War II, and the ‘90s) or just the ‘90s and the Second World War, when many Serbs died at the hands of the Croatian regime which collaborated with Nazi Germany. While Luka named such proposals as examples of “an awful relativization”, which is “problematic on multiple levels”, the parents of the killed children agreed with the idea to commemorate their children alongside those who were killed in WW2. At this writing, the negotiation is still underway, and further complicated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; however, the longevity of their struggle to establish a monument and the different actors who oppose or wish to amend their approaches speaks to the challenges that groups encounter when pursuing memorialization projects that challenge the dominant ethnonational narratives of victimization.

At the same time, the entire process that the group has engaged in can be seen as a way to challenge the dominant narratives as well. Luka recounts how a member of their initiative, a journalist, spoke with experts from the United States who advised her “to do whatever the group can to ensure that the monument does not get built”. This idea might seem as a counterintuitive advice to give to a group with a sole purpose of establishing a monument to children in this community. The expert argument, however, was that building the monument represents a “potential end to the process of dealing [with the past]. As long as the process is alive, as long as it is something that is happening on the streets, something dynamic, that is in reality the process of dealing [with the past]”, Luka explains. In that sense, the potential for their initiative to challenge the dominant narratives lies not only in the final project: a monument to children that moves beyond the ethnonational narratives, but also in the process towards that goal, which embodies dealing with the past in raising awareness and negotiation with community stakeholders. While Luka shares this expert opinion, he also acknowledges that the group is focused on establishing this monument, but that following this line of thinking, there are opportunities for them to think about how to continuously engage with the past and challenge the dominant narratives. For example, he puts forward goals that could come next: “to persuade the city mayor to, just as he lays flowers and commemorates the fallen Serbian soldiers, in the same way comes to that monument [to children]” or “for us to organize commemorations... I mean, a monument can have its dynamic and its life, but it depends on the people”. In sharing this perspective, Luka brings the attention to the different ways in which civil society actors can go about challenging the dominant narratives, not just in the way they envision the conceptual design

of the monument, but in the process of establishing the monument and engaging with it in the future. In what ways is this process aided by its particular emphasis on child victims?

Challenging the Dominant Narratives

In this section, I explored a museum, an exhibition, a theatrical production, and an ongoing initiative which includes memorialization in a video format. While they each have a slightly different approach, they all go beyond the dominant narratives of victimization that focus solely on victimhood of a single ethnic group. The fact that these memorialization efforts approach the past differently, through more universal, inclusive, or critical approaches points out their opposition to the dominant narratives. I further unpack what it is about these memorialization efforts that enables them to challenge the dominant narratives, and specifically, how their focus on children in war supports them in that pursuit. Recognizing the perception of children as a vulnerable and an innocent group, I point out the capacity that these memorialization efforts have to invoke emotional responses in the audience. Empathizing with the children who experienced war makes it easier to acknowledge the victimhood even among those who belong to an ethnic group other than your own. In that sense, remembering children in war helps complicate the victim-perpetrator binaries established by the victimization narratives, thereby challenging the dominant approaches to remembering the past.

In exploring how the focus on children as part of these memorialization initiatives supports their ability to challenge the dominant narratives, I turn to the perceptions of children as vulnerable. Examining the portrayal of children in war movies, Lury (2010) explains that we are “feeling sorry for those who cannot care for themselves and for those we believe should be cared for as some kind of universal right (pp. 105-106). As such,

children invoke a different kind of response compared to other age groups. Nita states how “it sort of shows how wrong and not acceptable conflict and war is that we ... of course, older people are also important, and their lives should not be lost but it has some extra sentiment when it comes to children”. When talking about the messages that memorials of children can communicate, Marija explained how

putting the children [in memorialization practices] sends a message that in pretensions to territory suffer those whom it least concerns and those who are the most vulnerable category of our society; for whom we all have the responsibility to take care of them, and not put them in those kinds of dangers.

Sofija points out that children are “the most vulnerable category of our society, a societal category which did not have control over their lives at any moment, and could not choose what will happen, where they will be, and so on”. In other words, previous literature and my research indicate that when studying the memorials which feature children in war, the perception of children as a vulnerable group stands out.

Due to such social construction of children, remembering child victims invokes an emotional response for the audience or visitors. While this had not been the primary motivation for focusing on children in the examples I study, those involved acknowledge this emotional capacity stemming from the memorialization of children. In creating the play “A Lullaby for Mladenka”, the Mostar Youth Theater team soon narrowed their approach to commemorating the crime in Grabovica to Mladenka’s story. Vedad explains how they were improvising, and eventually brought in the lullaby and the cradle, and the concept started to unfold”. He shares about their choice to focus on a child:

And then it was very normal that it be called ‘A Lullaby for Mladenka’. That child of 4 years is really ... who could find a 4-year-old guilty? And she was killed on her birthday when she turned 4 and not for a second did we question whether we should do it [focus the play on her].

Having placed her story at the center of the performance, they recognized additional impact of this choice:

We knew that if it is a story about a child, if there are toys, an empty cradle, that it will gather the audience emotionally (...) We needed that fast emotional connection with the audience because that was a guarantee that the audience will be able to digest it more easily.

Themselves affected by Mladenka's story, as a young child, the team decided to center the play around her experience, recognizing that it would also help establish an emotional connection with the audience.

Such emotional connection, in turn, helps explain why memorializing children in particular serves as a way to challenge the dominant narratives. The *Jer me se tiče* initiative in Prijedor gathered to envision an approach that goes beyond the monoethnic narratives related to the past. At the same time, the parents' association in Prijedor started their fight to erect a monument to children, and the two joined forces. Luka shared their thought process:

if we are resisting those nationalistic emotions, charges, then we too must act on that level, and empathy towards a killed child... we hoped that it would be strong enough to establish a kind of anti-thesis (...) to oppose these national, emotional charges.

In this statement, he recognizes that the ethnonational narratives that they seek to oppose operate on an emotional level. Hence, it seems logical to them to try to counter it through the use of emotions as well, which prompted them to connect with the group that worked on establishing a monument to children, as a group likely to invoke emotions. This connection between children, emotions, and resistance to ethnonational narratives showed up in their work. When talking about the video that I had analyzed, Luka explained how the "children who were killed were close in age [to the young people in the video]. The

idea again was about evoking empathy, compassion, not seeing just the national and religious identity”. In this video, where they had blurred the lines of clearly cut ethnic communities by having young people remember children who died, but are not associated with their supposed ethnic group, relied on an emotional response to children as a way to challenge ethnonational remembering.

Alongside the perception of children as vulnerable is the perception of children’s innocence, which facilitated the development of an inclusive exhibition in the case of the ‘Once upon a Time and Never Again’. Marta describes how when explaining their ethnically inclusive approach to families, “everybody said that it shouldn’t be any other way because all of these children, all of them should be alive and whatever happened between adults and states and war, the childrens’ [death] should never be a result of that”. Such a response illustrates how the particular innocence associated with children helped escape the divisive narratives. In this statement, we recognize the perception of children as innocent - deserving of protection and happiness - which was taken away from them as the most vulnerable group in war (Ansell, 2017). At the same time, children’s innocence shows up more literally as well. When exploring why families responded so positively to the exhibition, Marta states:

this might be also because the exhibition is only about children so there is no ground to doubt anything... When it comes to adults, even civilians, there are always people who will say maybe they were helping the army, maybe they were somehow contributing, but when it came to children, nobody doubted anything, nobody asked anything, [such as] who killed them because no matter who killed them they should have been alive”.

Through these responses we see that a more general perception of children as innocent, but also the literal innocence of the children in that particular conflict, facilitated a shared memorialization project that challenged the divisive approaches to memorialization. At the

same time, remembering this vulnerable and innocent group might open up the space for discussing other groups too.

Along the blurring of ethnic identities, the emotional responses to the memories of children in war help complicate the perceptions of victims and perpetrators. Recognizing the empathy that comes more easily when speaking about children, Nita perceives the children's stories as the first step to acknowledging other groups of victims:

We can agree about the stories of these children no matter their nationality (...) Slowly, from there, we can start to agree of (*sic*) the other [groups] and be more accepting of the other (...). Because children (...) were rarely or almost never killed alone. They were mostly with mothers, and if not with only mothers, they were also with other civilians in the places where they thought they would be the safest so in the same circumstances where these children were killed also other civilians were killed so it is just one step at a time: so, we can talk about children, then we can talk about civilians and I think it will take more time to talk about the war itself and the actors.

In this statement, Nita acknowledges the ways in which it is easier to acknowledge the victimhood of children, as a vulnerable, innocent group. Such perception of children opens up the opportunity to extend such empathy to other civilian victims. Furthermore, she states how

when you remember children as victims, especially children from other ethnicities, this idea that all Serbs, in this example, are perpetrators, is not really true, because it is a child we are talking about. (...) We are talking about very concrete distinction between the government and the people or civilians in this case, so I always see this as a good outcome of remembering children”.

In that sense, recognizing the victimhood of children from “the other” group helps one acknowledge that not all members of that group are perpetrators. Since children's vulnerability makes it easier to recognize their victimhood regardless of their ethnic background, memories of children in war have the potential to help recognize the victimhood of others, even if they belong to another ethnic group. In doing so, the

memories of children in war challenge the dominant narratives which establish a clear cut between victims and perpetrators along ethnic lines. What impact do such initiatives then have for peace and reconciliation?

The Impact of Memorialization for Peace and Reconciliation

While the theoretical transitional justice framework presupposes a positive impact of memorialization for peace and reconciliation, McDowell and Braniff (2014) complicate this premise. They draw our attention to the ways in which memory can be divisive in post-war contexts such as those I study. In these contexts, McDowell and Braniff (2014) suggest focusing on shared narratives. Their framework informs how I interrogate the relationship between memorialization and reconciliation in the case studies. While reconciliation is a contested and ambiguous concept in transitional justice literature, I draw out key elements from my research participants' perspectives. Based on their insights and the distinction between examples that support the dominant narratives of victimization and those that challenge them, I explore the perceived impact of memorials on reconciliation. Their responses help me identify how monuments that neglect the victimhood of other ethnic groups hinder the reconciliation process. In contrast, recognizing others' victims explicitly or as part of more inclusive and universal memorials seems to benefit reconciliation by bringing communities together in the process of memorialization. Going beyond the conversation about ethnic representation in memorialization, the research participants draw my attention to two other elements of memorialization that support its reconciliatory impact. They discuss the importance of representing children in war as active agents in efforts to better connect with their stories, but also acknowledge the survivors' capacity to continue with their lives following hardship. This brings them to the second important way in which memorialization can contribute to reconciliation: by creating spaces for individual and societal healing in the process of dealing with the past. Similarly in relation to another

contentious concept – peace – I highlight the research participants’ observations of how acknowledging children’s casualties communicates a message against war, which they view as a message of peace. This message makes memorials to children suitable for conducting peace education with younger generations in post-war contexts. Recognizing the potential of memorializing children to communicate this message for peace, I conclude with some best practices and guidelines regarding the ways in which we can memorialize children to support those aims.

Recognizing the “Other’s” Victimhood

When speaking about memorialization practices that contribute to reconciliation, an important factor seems to be honoring the deaths of those from an ethnic group other than your own. Many participants mentioned the work of the Women in Black, an NGO in Belgrade, that holds annual commemorations of the Srebrenica genocide in Belgrade the day before they go to Srebrenica to join the commemorations. Speaking about the meaning of these actions in both of the countries, Zoran explained that “as much as they are marginalized here, those women, they are... for example, the commemoration of the genocide in Srebrenica Potočari cannot happen without them, you understand?”. In other words, while the commemorations they hold in Belgrade are not well-received locally, their presence in Srebrenica is essential. Their lack of popularity at home is not surprising given the narratives about Serbian victimhood. However, the significance of their presence in Srebrenica reveals that the acknowledgement of crimes by those who come from Serbia is important for reconciliation. Zoran points out that this is so significant because it communicates the message that “they are not all the same”, countering the dominant narratives put forth by the media in Serbia and the Republika Srpska which tend to “negate

the genocide in Srebrenica”. The fact that actions like this one show that not everyone in Serbia shares that opinion, Zoran argues, “continues to keep the reconciliation process open”.

This insight about the impact of memorialization helps evaluate the role of memorializing children in war for reconciliation. It has been explained above that the interview participants from Serbia disapprove of the fact that the monument in Belgrade does not commemorate children other than Serb children. Since that element of acknowledging crimes that have happened to others is lacking, this monument ought not to contribute to reconciliation. Zoran explains in more detail why this can be so by asking:

So what would people think seeing this [the monument] if they were to come from a culture which cherishes that the children of Kosovar Albanians died and so on. You know, let’s say if I were that child, I don’t know that I would like to come to Belgrade again.

In posing this question, he points out that a monument that conceals the crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians, instead of acknowledging them, would not create trust and cultivate a positive relationship among Serbs and Albanians - in other words, it would not contribute to the process of reconciliation. Marta, his colleague from Kosovo, agrees when she states:

If we will have two narratives, we will never reach any kind of reconciliation. So, I think we need to work more and force more of a joint narrative, a narrative that is based on facts and truth and always share both sides and inform both sides about the truth.

In other words, a joint narrative, or one that creates the space for recognizing the crimes committed by and to both groups, is necessary for reconciliation, while examples that fail to acknowledge the victimhood of another group present an obstacle in that pursuit.

Indeed, memorialization efforts at times inflame the ethnic divides through competing narratives, as another example of a harmful impact for reconciliation. Sokol (2014) explains that:

In divided societies, memorials can be very dangerous, fortify divisions, and even provoke future conflicts. In fact, monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina construct and reinforce mutually exclusive narratives that are part of the ethno-national identities, and as such are instruments of identity building. Memory initiatives are very rarely directed towards civic nation-building that would include all the ethno-national groups. Instead, identity consolidation is carried out on the level of the ethno-national groups, within which monuments only serve to strengthen divisions (p.121)

Sokol (2014) is saying that monuments, which strengthen mutually exclusive narratives in their processes of ethno-national identity building, are harmful for intergroup relations. Using this insight to evaluate the monuments dedicated to children in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo does not give very optimistic responses. While the inclusivity of the monument to children of besieged Sarajevo is debatable, the existence of a similar memorial, but dedicated to specifically Serbian victims, establishes an oppositional relationship between these two monuments, as explained previously. In that sense, we may recognize the competing narratives in these two monuments, which according to Sokol, would be harmful for group relations. The ethnically exclusive monuments that I covered seem not to be conducive for reconciliation; however, other case studies employ a different approach with an opposite impact.

The play “Lullaby for Mladenka”, directed by a former army member about a crime committed by that army, displays how commemorating “the other” supports reconciliation. Even when acknowledging that those involved in the production of the play represent a multiethnic team that goes beyond the reductive ethno-national identities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vedad recognizes the impact of his effort, as a man identified with the

Bosniak community, directing a play about the death of a Croatian child. The process he describes in creating this play showcases how this approach to memorialization supports reconciliation. He describes how he “established contact with the group [victims’ association] in Grabovica. The first conversation was very hard, mistrustful, which was to be expected”. Considering the divisive victimization narratives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is not surprising that the group responded in such a way. However, things changed as the conversation went on. Vedad explains how “the anticipated 30 minute conversation lasted about 3 hours”, moving “from mistrust to incredible trust”. Among the people he met while working on this play were Mladenka’s two brothers. He describes their interaction: “they took me through Grabovica to show me around”. They kept in touch: “our encounters are emotional; they can’t go without hugs whenever we meet. Especially one of them who communicates more ... It is as though his own father is heading his way”. In describing his engagement with the community affected by the killing, particularly Mladenka’s brothers, Vedad shows how engaging in a memorialization project that remembers “the other” helped him transform a relationship of mistrust into a trusting and close relationship.

Of course, the reconciliatory impact of the play did not occur just for the director. After the performance of the “Lullaby to Mladenka”, the Mostar Youth Theater oftentimes holds conversations with the audience. Vedad describes one of those conversations:

An older man rose and said: ‘Children, thank you for this. You are seven angels. Then we found out that this was their [Grabovica’s] priest. Then a president of a local association of Bosnian Croat war veterans thanked us and congratulated us. He was visibly shaken, and he said that it’s about time to do something like this in all “Grabovicas” in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said that he was in Ahmići, that he laid flowers there, that he was very shaken and he said one thing that resounds: ‘I dream of a day when a Croat will make a play to the little Sejo in Ahmići’.

In talking about the impact of the play, he shares with me the comments by these two important community members: representatives from the Catholic Church and from the war veterans' association, to showcase the ways in which their performance was able to reach key actors in the community and invoke positive responses. Furthermore, in describing his visit to Ahmići, the representative of a war veterans' association is compelled to share the ways in which he, too, recognizes the crimes that were committed to Bosniaks by Croats, members of his ethnic community. He further reciprocates by emphasizing that he wishes that a play, like the "Lullaby to Mladenka", be made by a Croatian group to commemorate Bosniak victims, e.g. little Sejo, which is something that Vedad also wanted to see happen inspired by his play. In reflecting on this post-performance conversation, we see how the choice to commemorate the death of someone from "the other group" helps reach key actors from another community, who in turn are more willing to recognize the crimes committed by their group as well - something that normally does not happen in the competing narratives of victimization in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, this play is not contained to a one-off event: its impact and ties to the community continue. At the anniversary of the killing, Vedad collaborated with the Center for Nonviolent Action, an NGO with headquarters in Sarajevo and Belgrade, which organizes educational activities for former combatants from "all armies" involved in the conflict. As part of this project, around 30 former soldiers got to watch the performance, participate in a round table, and join the commemoration in Grabovica. He points out how at this commemoration, the president of the Grabovica association "talked about the play and about me [Vedad] for about 8 minutes", which was very influential. One of the

attendees joked how “since 1993, a non-Croatian name has not been mentioned in a positive light in Grabovica”. He provides additional clarification: “I am not saying this to highlight myself but to show how much the play relaxed things”. The stories he shares around the commemoration in Grabovica illustrate how the play enabled a continuous interaction across ethnic divides which helped improve perceptions of another group and even engaged other actors who played a key role in the conflict, such as former soldiers.

The ethnically inclusive memorialization of children in Kosovo exemplifies a similar reconciliatory impact in that society. As explained previously, the Humanitarian Law Center clearly communicated to the families of the children that they would be remembered in an ethnically inclusive manner, which the families agreed with. In that process, the organization also created the space for them to get to know each other when the exhibition was opened. Marta describes that encounter:

All the families were here. They started to meet each other, [hear each other's] stories. (...) I never find the words to really describe this but in some weird way -- they were not happy that it happened to other people -- but [they] just [felt] a relief that what they went through was not only to them. (...) What happened to them also happened to others in very similar ways and they had this great empathy for each other, and the entire exhibition became very peaceful and joining like a common ground for the families and also for the visitors from both sides”.

This description showcases many elements of reconciliation in action at the opening of this exhibition. First of all, it created the space for families and visitors of different ethnicities to engage in the same space. In listening to each other's stories, the families acknowledged the shared experience of suffering despite the difference in their ethnic identity - an impact that is particularly meaningful considering the narratives of victimization which obstruct one from acknowledging the suffering of the other. This allowed them to experience

empathy for one another, indicating a very different kind of interaction across ethnic divides, which I argue deserves to be called reconciliation.

The War Childhood Museum's universal and inclusive approach to remembering childrens' experiences similarly helps transcend ethnic identities with a positive impact on reconciliation. Referring to the War Childhood Museum, Sara stated that it:

can contribute to the process of reconciliation and dealing with the past because children are exactly someone who should not be put in certain, I would say, ethnic or national groups because they are children, who did not choose that, right? (...) So I think that this is something that can definitely contribute to reconciliation and understanding the universality, that a victim is a victim regardless of the group they belong to.

This comment illustrates how the perception of children as vulnerable and innocent, which I have explored in the previous section, not only challenges the dominant narratives, but also contributes to reconciliation because it recognizes the impact that the war has had on a child regardless of their ethnicity. Zoran seemed to agree when stating that "the motif of pure innocence, something that is true only for children, is incredible. It can have an incredible impact on the reconciliation process, an incredible one!". If recognizing someone as a victim is important for reconciliation, that might be easier done in the case of a victim whose innocence appears to be, or in fact is, non-debatable. Given these insights, the War Childhood Museum's inclusive approach to remembering childrens' experiences seems to be a form of memorialization beneficial for reconciliation. All of these examples focus on recognizing the victimhood of others, and in the next section, I discuss why perceiving them as active agents matters for reconciliation too.

Active Agents in Memorialization Efforts

Remembering children as active agents seems important for the reconciliatory effect of memorialization since it helps establish an emotional connection with the children. Even when commemorating child *victims* of the conflict in Kosovo, the Humanitarian Law Center shifted away from this passive representation and evoked empathy for the children. Explaining why the organization decided to curate the exhibition with items that represented childrens' lives, Marta describes the following outcome:

the victims all of a sudden get stripped from only the victim tag and they become people and it (...) gives a much better empathy and [we] see that the victims of war were not some people predestined to be killed. They were not just some victims of war somewhere. They were people just like everybody else.

Striving to depict the children in the exhibition as people, and not mere victims, the Humanitarian Law Center presented the children as active agents despite commemorating those who are unfortunately no longer with us. In doing so, they hoped to make it easier for the visitors to empathize with the children because as she states, "it is better to put out there the similarity that we had with all of these victims in our lives and how they were like us. (...) You can see that easily you could have been one of the victims". Displaying the objects associated with the lives of the children in an effort to present them as active agents helps the audience connect with the children, recognize the similarities between our lives and theirs, making it easier to understand how they were victims, just like any of us could have been. Knowing that the ability to recognize the victimhood of others is important in the process of reconciliation, this example serves to indicate how the portrayal of children as active agents can aid us in that process by making it easier to relate to children in war.

The War Childhood Museum too curates their exhibition with the perception of children in war as active agents too. Amela explains that:

What is really important for us is not to represent those who grew up during the war, or those whose childhood was influenced by war or some armed conflict, to not represent them as victims, to of course validate their experience as very traumatic, but also [to show] that we all have some coping mechanisms, ways to deal with the situation and everything around us, and that is true for children too.

When displaying personal experiences of those whose childhood was affected by war, the Museum staff find it important to acknowledge their ability to deal with that situation. She emphasizes “representing children’s way to influence the people around them, what they were dealing with ... Representing them as active agents, and not just as passive victims who can’t... who are affected by the society, and who do not affect the society.” This is particularly important to them because of the feedback that they got from people who were children during the war: “that they seek validation, for it is a difficult experience, but also that they are strong and able to find the resources to deal with the situation”. She also pointed out that many of them conclude their story submissions for the museum by emphasizing how they were able “to continue with their everyday lives”. Those who have suffered as a result of war in their childhood find it important to look forward.

The Museum’s engagement with children who survived the war as active agents serves a healing purpose, which further contributes to reconciliation. When asked about the impact of memorialization on reconciliation, the museum’s employee pointed out the importance of “not only staying on the topic of memories related to that period but also the period after and the continuation of life. I think that this is important because it sends that message that life goes on after conflict”. However, what does emphasizing that life goes on have to do with improving relationships between people? She explains: “I think that contributing to individual wellbeing is very important for the entire community, so I think that through that there is a direct relation between one and the other”. The Museum’s

emphasis on the children's ability to continue with their lives despite going through a traumatic experience of war contributes to their individual healing, which translates onto societal healing as well – a process that entails improved relationships among people. This analysis of the way in which the Museum positively impacts reconciliation echoes the framework of dealing with the past. Dragovic-Soso (2010) explains that “giving traumatic memory a public space helps victims and survivors work through the trauma”, which is necessary for “healing, forgiveness and reconciliation” (p. 34). In that sense, the focus on children in war as active agents enables the Museum to deal with a traumatic past through its activities in a way that supports healing on an individual level, but also for the wider society, thereby supporting reconciliation.

The connection between memorialization and healing shows up in other case studies too. When speaking about working on a play about conflict, Katarina claimed that “it was important to touch upon that [topic], so that the wounds of war would hurt a little less (...) and to not run away from it, because when we run away, we suppress it and create even deeper pain”. She explains how the play's engagement with the past was an act of healing for those involved as actors or the audience because it allowed them to process, rather than suppress it. It seems as though some healing occurred for the families involved in developing the exhibition in Kosovo too. Trying to put into words the encounter between families at the opening of the exhibition, Marta perceived a kind of “relief” among the families as they recognized that they are not alone in the experience of suffering their child's death. This kind of relief invokes a similar image of recounting a difficult past in a way that makes it a bit lighter and more bearable - a kind of healing. In a similar way, an example from the *Jer me se tiče* team shows that memorialization could have healing

benefits for the families, especially in a context where the state authorities obstruct their efforts or even neglect or deny their childrens' deaths. Luka speaks about the father who is at the forefront of the parents association in Prijedor, which collaborates with *Jer me tiče* on the efforts to establish a monument to children there. He explains how this father "never wants you to give him money or anything, the only thing that matters is for someone to admit, for the city of Prijedor to admit, that his children were killed and that's it". All of these examples serve to show that, just as in the case of the War Childhood Museum, memorialization projects can support the healing processes for those involved, displaying yet another way in which they help contribute to reconciliation.

While reconciliation is a concept that is hard to define, I sought to represent the ways in which my research participants view it and trace elements of memorials to children in war, which oppose or support the reconciliation processes as they view them. My discussion started with a consideration of ethnic inclusivity or exclusivity, which seemed important for reconciliation. For example, Zoran's discussion of the ways in which an ethnically exclusive monument in Belgrade might discourage a Kosovo Albanian from coming to Serbia illustrates how denying someone's victimhood harms the level of trust among communities. This remark seems to view reconciliation as an increase in trust between communities. We see this happening within ethnically inclusive examples, like the exhibition in Kosovo, which also creates the space for communities to inhabit the same place, such as Serbian and Albanian families which met at the exhibition. This notion of bringing communities together showed up in the case of a theater performance too, and it illustrates another prominent way in which my research participants conceptualize reconciliation: connecting divided communities. Finally, the research participants also

show an understanding of reconciliation that is closely tied to healing, both on an individual and societal level. This perspective is underpinned by an understanding that acknowledging and processing the past is necessary for building a healthier society, which seems to be another way in which they conceptualize reconciliation. How do, then, these memorials to children interact with another important concept: peace?

Memorializing Children for Peace

Memorializing the war experiences of children, as a vulnerable group, communicates an important message for peace. Marija claims that such memorials “send the message that the consequences of our political deliberations reach the smallest pores of our society; that political reasoning must always keep in mind what it can bring about and that certain decisions made on the top of the political hierarchy must be considered from that standpoint too”. She goes on to say: “but somehow no one thinks about what happens with communities when they enter armed conflicts, especially what happens to the most vulnerable parts of society, such as minorities, women, children”. In other words, Marija argues that memorializing children in war reminds the observers that high-ranking politicians’ decisions harm the most vulnerable, and that the memory of such loss helps warn us about the horrific nature of war. Omar looks into the past to indicate the horrific impact of forgetting:

we had a problem with WW2 too for it was never emphasized that war brings about the suffering of the innocent, the most innocent (...) there should be a clear anti-war message to never have war again here because those who suffer are children, the most innocent ones.

Sofija too speaks about the Second World War, pointing out that “the crimes committed by the Partisans (...) were swept under the rug”, which she disagrees with because she

believes that “in order to prevent any crimes in the future, we have to deal with the past”. While Sofija speaks in broader terms, and Omar with a specific focus on remembering children, both put forward the importance of remembering the past to ensure non-repetition. While remembering the suffering of all groups is important, Nita reiterates the importance of remembering children as a vulnerable group. She states, “of course older people are also important and their lives should not be lost, but it has some extra sentiment when it comes to children (...) they are very young, sort of unprotected (...) reconciliation is the only way to move forward, not conflict and war, because our youngest sort of suffered from that”.

The research participants emphasize the particular ways in which the two exhibitions I covered communicate such anti-war messages. Speaking about the impact of the War Childhood Museum in Sarajevo, Sara explains that the museum “talks about that [child] experience and why every war and conflict is wrong and who the most vulnerable groups are”, reiterating the point that memorializing children as a vulnerable group helps put forward the message that war is wrong. Marta shares how their exhibition ‘Once Upon a Time and Never Again’ shows that everything that “happened to these children was unfair and should not have happened and should not happen in the future”. She recounts the impact that the organization wanted to have through the exhibition:

[to] make all visitors that come here hopefully more aware (...) and to (...) give just a little bit more importance to this topic. This was the idea of the exhibition and I think that if not to everybody, to most of the people, we have sent this message.

Once again, we see how an exhibition dedicated to the experiences of children in war serves to inform the audience of the ways in which wars affect this group in the hopes that such atrocities would not happen again in the future.

The anti-war message of memorials to children in war makes it an important tool for education about peace. The War Childhood Museum utilizes its collection to develop workshops for children with the goal of “raising their awareness about all the different childhoods that exist, about the advantages associated with a peaceful childhood in comparison to childhood in war” (Takševa, 2018, p. 14). An encouraging consequence is that the children “start to tell [them] about how peace is important” and they promise to be “guardians of peace” (Takševa, 2018, p.14). Through this experience of the War Childhood Museum’s founder, which he shared with Takševa, we see that remembering the children who suffered in war can also teach the new generations about the importance of peace. Sofija confirmed this impact when commenting on the work of the museum and saying that “the museum itself presents a very difficult image to children in a very interesting way (...) and strengthens the awareness among children about why peace is important and why we should never enter war again”. Nita complemented their efforts too, stating more broadly that “once museums sort of combine their exhibition and remembrance sector with educational [activities] (...) they play a major role in reconciliation”. In other words, memorializing children who were impacted in war and sharing their experience with young people today serves as a tool for peace and reconciliation.

Given these various impacts of the memorials featuring children in war, the participants conclude that this motif can communicate very positive and powerful messages. Marija shares:

I think that the motif of children and the suffering of children can actually help get together all the people with different opinions about that [matter] and reach a consensus at least there, that this is something no one wants to happen. If we can't agree about anything else, perhaps this is something that we can agree on, that we do not want to see consequences like these anymore.

Zoran also recognizes a massive potential in “initiatives to, without a pathetic approach, without a manipulation of the children’s suffering or similar things, to narrate the war, the entire war, through children’s perspective”. Commenting on the stories of survivors, he says that they “can be a link that can really lead to reconciliation, especially keeping in mind that those children are now grown-ups and they all, regardless of their background, can hear that they just wanted a piece of candy”. Marija goes so far as to claim that remembering children represents “the most effective, the most striking motif that can be used”; however, she draws a line by saying “but of course even here exist some exceptions, some limitations regarding how far we can go, without it being reduced to an exploitation of children or encroachment on their privacy”. Sara shares the same perspective when she says that “by using this motif we can send a powerful and good message, but it all depends on the way in which we present it”.

While research participants highlight how memorializing children can have positive effects, they caution against certain practices that can nonetheless be harmful. Throughout the paper, I highlighted their preference for inclusive memorialization. Nita brings back this point when claiming “if it is not filled with some one-sided, nationalistic narratives; as long as it is inclusive and holistic approach in remembering that child or those children, (...) it only does good”. In that sense, she reiterates the support for inclusive memorialization. Similarly, Luka raises concerns regarding the use of memory for other purposes, which I explored in sections about the politicization and manipulation of memory. He stresses the importance of considering whether memorialization efforts “abuse” the memory of children in an “ethical” or “moral” sense because he recognizes

that focusing on children can invoke emotional responses. However, he believes that “we need to remember children as children, that’s simple” and recognizes that remembering children in particular “opens the possibility to see humans as humans first, and then members of ethnic or religious groups”. In that sense, his reflection invites us to consider the purpose behind memorializing children. Others draw our attention to how we memorialize children. I have already explored the benefits of approaching children as active agents and Nita further builds on this point. She does “not approve of a very violent, hateful way of remembering especially for children, for example their entire life to be focused on the way they were killed and not a bit on the way they lived”. She references examples which “detailed photos of the massacres” which she disagrees with for they can be “very traumatic for the families”. In that sense, when asked about the ways to remember children in a way that supports peace and reconciliation, they reiterate the points that guided this paper: cautioning against ethnicization and manipulation of memory, while supporting a conceptualization of children in war as more than just victims.

Conclusion

Can remembering children in war overcome the divisive narratives of victimization, which permeate the memory landscape in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo and obstruct the peace and reconciliation processes in these post-war societies? While exploring the efforts to memorialize children in war in these three societies did not provide me with a secret formula, it helped kick start a conversation about the impact of memorializing this particular social category within the narratives of the past in these societies. Relying on 11 semi-structured interviews with civil society representatives from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, as well as existing literature, I showcased the ways in which memorialization of children in war can both consolidate and challenge the dominant narratives of victimization. In the case of monuments in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, I pointed out the ethnicization and politicization of memory, alongside exaggerated numbers of victims, which societies use to consolidate the victimization narratives. In these contexts, the innocence and vulnerability of children was a contributing factor for strengthening these narratives. In contrast, exhibitions, a theatrical production, and a video project, which I explored as alternative approaches to memorialization, went beyond the victimization narratives through more inclusive and universal memorialization, with greater focus on dealing with the past. In these cases, too, the vulnerability and innocence associated with children proved to be important for their potential to challenge the narratives of victimization. Building on my analysis of examples that support and those that challenge the dominant narratives of victimization, I highlighted how memorials to children can create obstacles or support reconciliation processes. Finally, I recognized the

massive potential in preserving stories of child casualties as a way to communicate a strong anti-war message, thereby pointing out the importance of such memorialization for peace.

I believe that this research has important implications. In the context of academic literature, it contributes to the conversation regarding the impact of memorialization for peace and reconciliation. Through this paper, I sought to highlight the ways in which local actors conceptualize reconciliation and view the role of memorials to children in war within those processes. Not only did I wish to give more visibility to local perspectives and initiatives that can easily be neglected, but I hoped to provide relevant empirical data for a theoretical discussion about the benefits and harms of memorialization. My analysis considered memorials to children in war in particular, as a growing motif used in memorialization efforts, which has achieved very little academic attention. Towards the end of my research paper, I summarized some of the key points regarding best practices when it comes to memorializing children in war, which I hope can prove useful to actors who might work on similar projects in the future.

Based on my research participants' perspectives, this paper strongly favors examples of memorializing children in war which, in my opinion, represent alternative approaches to remembering the past. These examples are diverse, even if my analysis places them in the same category. I sought to clarify how the War Childhood Museum takes on a universal approach, meaning that they focus on children regardless of ethnicity. The exhibition in Kosovo is inclusive in the sense that it commemorates children of different ethnicities in the same room. The play in Mostar, on the other hand, commemorates the ethnically "other" child. And the initiative in Prijedor combines these approaches. In my consideration of existing literature, I acknowledge how McDowell and

Braniff (2014) and in particular Ristic (2018) caution against the potential for more ethnically inclusive memorials to equalize victims and perpetrators, which I understand can be unacceptable to some. I am aware that certain readers might disagree with my support for examples of universal memorialization, which pay the least attention to naming perpetrators' and victims' ethnic affiliation. They might argue that these examples should be considered as separate from, for e.g. the play in Mostar, which is strongly motivated by holding one's own perpetrator group accountable. However, while my research participants helped me understand the particularities of these memorials, they viewed themselves within the shared category of alternative approaches which mirrors the broader work of civil society in countering the dominant victimization narratives. Additionally, none of them shared any concerns or criticisms related to the War Childhood Museum, as an example that is most likely to fall under the scrutiny of those who are concerned with memorialization that might set an equivalence between ethnic groups that is not proportionate to the number of victims. Perhaps, as I explored in the paper, the fact that these memorials focus on children makes it more appropriate for them to transcend the ethnic identities and focus on honoring the victims in efforts to prevent such suffering from happening again to anyone, anywhere. However, my research is just the beginning of what I hope will be a field that can help us understand the most effective and appropriate ways of memorializing children for peace and reconciliation.

There are many opportunities for further research related to this topic. My analysis focuses on memorialization efforts from three countries, but in the same region, and in response to related conflicts of the 1990s. Further research can explore memorialization of children in war related to other conflicts and regional contexts to help deepen the

understanding of the particular role that memorials to children play within the narratives of the past. Even within the geographical region, I recognize opportunities for a historical analysis of memorialization and civil society efforts in order to outline what processes need to take place before societies can utilize approaches to memorialization that I suggest. Are victimization narratives more likely to take place right after conflict? Does some time need to pass for memorialization efforts to go beyond the victimization narratives? What needs to happen for this to be possible? While my research participants hint at the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which provides the factual basis for many of their efforts, a more comprehensive analysis focused on domestic political processes is needed to engage with these questions. Furthermore, it might be helpful to examine the formats of memorialization in more detail. My first iteration of this research focused on monuments and exhibitions only, and I recognized the opportunity to explore other memorialization formats, which informed my choice to focus on theatrical and virtual memorialization in this rendition of the research. Further research should remain open to different forms of memorialization. Additionally, there is an opportunity to pay greater attention to the ways in which the format itself can be a relevant variable for determining the impact of memorialization for peace and reconciliation. Finally, I recognize the value in focusing academic research on how different actors use the experiences of children in war not in the process of dealing with the past, but during ongoing conflicts. I hope that all further research related to this topic will help us ensure that we do not forget the children who were killed, went missing, or whose childhoods were affected by various conflicts around the world. Remembering their fates can support us in building a more peaceful

future by reminding us of the casualties that wars bring to the most vulnerable and innocent ones.

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APPENDIX A. Interview Questions

1. How does the Serbian/Bosnian/Kosovar society remember the wars of the 1990's in your opinion?
 1. What is the state policy regarding this topic, and how do citizens approach it? Is there a difference between these two approaches, and if so, what is it?
2. What impact does the international community have on memory in Serbia/Bosnia and Herzegovina/Kosovo, if any?
3. Can you tell me something more about the civil society's work regarding the memory of the wars of the 1990's?
 1. How much impact do you think that civil society has on remembering the wars of the 1990s?
4. Have you heard of examples that use the motif of children as victims of war in remembering the wars of the 1990s?
 1. Have you heard of examples in your country? In the region?
5. What do you think about this memorial (*insert example from the case study*)
 1. What, in your opinion, is the message of this memorial?
 2. What impact do you think this memorial has?
 3. Do you know of similar monuments in your country?
6. What is the role of museums, monuments, and other forms of remembering the wars for reconciliation?

APPENDIX B: Participants Chart

Participant	Organization	Field of Work	Interview Date
Zoran	Forum ZFD Serbia	NGO	March 9, 2020
Marija	Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia	NGO	March 11, 2020
Nikola	Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia	NGO	March 12, 2020
Sara	Forum ZFD BiH	NGO	April 16, 2020
Sofija	Post-Conflict Research Center	NGO	April 22, 2020
Amela	War Childhood Museum	Museum	April 24, 2020
Katarina	Mostar Youth Theater	Theater	July 22, 2020
Vedad	Mostar Youth Theater	Theater	July 22, 2020
Marta	Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo	NGO	August 3, 2020
Nita	Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo	NGO	August 11, 2020
Luka	Jer me se tiče	Initiative	September 9, 2020
Omar	Jer me se tiče	Initiative	September 24, 2020