



# **Creative endeavors as a ‘peacebuilding tool’: the “War of Memories” exhibition(s)**

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## **List of Acronyms**

Centre for Non-violent Action – CNA

Bosnia and Herzegovina- BiH

War of Memories- WoM

CNA Staff Member- CNA-SM

Local Organizer- LO

Community member- CM

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## **Abstract**

In the context of Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH), this study explores the role of memory and culture of remembrance using art. More specifically it considers the example of a photographic exhibition, showing in various sites, called 'War of Memories' and curated by the Centre for Non-Violent Action. The aim of this paper is to provide insights, by investigating how the exhibition was designed and its connection with peace-building and reconciliation. With new political and economic developments in BiH, the question addressed is how post-conflict reconciliation can be promoted – or not – through the use of the creative arts, in this case photographic images of places of suffering (marked and unmarked). To gather data on the topic, eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of three groups: members of the Centre for Non-Violent Action, community members and local organisers involved in peace activities and politics. Overall the finding was that the exhibition's contribution to peace-building is present but with limitations, possibly because audiences tend to be those already in favour of reconciliation, rather than those opposed to it. This finding is of potentially great importance, since building peace-building and reconciling BiH society – or any other post-conflict setting - is vital for a transformation from 'negative' to 'positive' peace. The dilemma remains of how to expand the potential reach of such arts projects for peace, across all sectors of the community. In a modest way, I believe that this study contributes to the wider field of peacebuilding, and focuses on the, admittedly limited, ability of the creative arts to challenge complex political and social attitudes that contribute to 'ethnic' conflict.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

The Dayton Peace Agreement has stopped the continuance of overt violence. Co-existence was somewhat attained but based on the current situation signing an agreement to ceasefire and terminate violence, did not lead to sustainable peace. Numerous challenges have been present throughout the peacebuilding process. Amongst others, memories and different ethno-specific narratives have led to the maintenance and resurgence of hostility. I believe that projects, such as the other ones administered by the Centre for Non-Violent Action, can have the ability to address reconciliation by using arts and more specifically address the often ignored and highly problematic culture of remembrance. Without raising unrealistic expectations of what an arts project can achieve, the findings of the current research paper will hopefully, portray how the implementors feel, acknowledge their input, and in that manner provide potential insights and useful reflections for the overall peacebuilding process and exhibitions of similar type.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Defining the Research Problem

There are different approaches to fostering peacebuilding and reconciliation, which have been present in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Zelizer 2003; Kollontai 2010). Arts-based peacebuilding has been used in BiH as to foster the rebuilding of social ties and relationships (Zelizer 2003: 65). Other than in BiH, such projects have taken place in different parts of the world such as Colombia, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Rwanda. Some assumptions guiding the art-based approach, support the view that arts can assist in transforming a conflict/war situation, into a new situation where reconstructing and reconciliation are possible (Kollontai 2010:269). Nevertheless, it is argued that through arts, individuals can develop the ability to envision something different, and become aware of themselves and others, since “art engages with the emotions and the heart” (Kollontai 2010: 269). In this way the arts are expected to raise awareness of the consequences and risks of future conflict and propagate more lasting forms of peace (Zelizer 2003: 71).

Even though it being recommended as an important aspect of reconciliation, both during and in the aftermath of war, if one were to look at the present situation in BiH, the success of creative approaches could be challenged. In a post-conflict situation, such as BiH, tensions can be high among communities, social relations can be volatile, ethnonationalism may be on the rise, resulting in a fragile peace. Under the social, political and cultural particularities in BiH, one could wonder what role creative approaches play in Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in the context of BiH, and whether the general assumptions underlying such endeavours are valid?

### 1.2 The Case Study: The War of Memories Exhibition(s)

In the Balkan region, the Centre for Non-Violent action, a non-governmental organization, through its activities has tried to contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation, with the emphasis on dealing with the past (Ljevak 2016). They did so with the use of academic research and publications, video materials, exhibitions, working with war veterans, and peace education (Ljevak 2016). One of CNA’s prominent projects entailed mapping the places of suffering and monuments in BiH. The objective of the project and their publication was

“to research (document and analyse) memorialization policies and cultures of remembrance in Bosnia and Herzegovina for all three warring sides, viewing it primarily in terms of the potential to bring lasting peace and reconciliation” (Franović 2016: I).

Different criteria were put in place for the selection of the monuments (and non-existent monuments), such as the location (whether the victims are an ethnic minority or majority), dedication (military or civilian casualties) and that it reflected the 1991-1995 time-frame (Franović 2016: 204). The three warring ethnic groups consisting of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats were embodied in the research. The data other than being gathered, was photographed. In their publication, they analysed the culture of remembrance during the BiH war, through the prevailing monuments affiliated with that period. The focus was also on different type of monuments such as places of remembrances, statues and installations, detention camps buildings, cemeteries, churches, commemorating plaques, but also on non-existent monuments and unmarked sites of suffering (Franović 2016: 204). They investigated who

the monuments were for, their message, and most importantly, how do they contribute to reconciliation, and in that way acknowledge the past beneficially (2016: 205).

Fifty-one monuments and places of remembrances (marked and unmarked) were photographed and used for photographic exhibitions 'War of memories' which took place throughout different countries and cities in the region (Serbia, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia). The mobile exhibition is the focus of my paper which has been curated differently in diverse locations, from differences in physical spaces, to individuals speaking at the events, politicians, war veterans, and CNA members. The exhibition aims: "To invite all social actors, that a culture of remembering is some-thing that is being built, and that it should be built in a constructive way, not as a continuation of the war" (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview)

### 1.3 Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace & Conflict

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a country located in South-eastern Europe (Western Balkans), bordering Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia, all former republics of Yugoslavia. The multiethnic composition of the country, consisting of Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats and other ethnic minorities, experienced immense suffering and turmoil during the period of 1991-1995. There are different interpretations of the roots of the conflict, with the most popular one relying on ethnic identity as a prominent aspect of violence.



Map 1 - Localizing Southeast Europe and BiH<sup>1</sup>

In the 90's throughout South-eastern Europe the emergence of violent conflict affected the region severely in both economic and social terms (Zelizer 2003: 62). During the 1990's war in BiH, due to the inhumane acts of violence across ethno-religious lines, many have lost their lives (100,000-200.000) and millions of individuals have been forcibly displaced (Lampe 2018: n.p; Kollontai 2010: 264). Interestingly, the number of casualties is still disputed amongst different ethnic groups, where different narratives, memories and culture of remembrance have blurred the lines in regard to victimhood and accountability. In BiH, the different narratives of the past are also evident in the war monuments themselves, which also depict the self, belonging to one group, usually victims, and their enemies in another group, usually perpetrators (Sokol 2013: 106). These exclusive narratives can be of great damage for peacebuilding efforts in BiH, where the intergenerational transmission of

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [Britannica](#)

the ethno-national accounts and memories continues to be an impediment for both sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Violation of human rights, rape and other inhumane acts of violence, were a part of everyday life during 1991-1995. Preceding the conflict, a nationalist discourse emerged which regarded other ethnic entities as enemies, threatening the very being of one's own entity (Zelizer 2003: 62). Contrary to the nationalistic discourse that has impacted the fuelling of the conflict in the Balkans, the history of peaceful co-existence regardless of different backgrounds (both religious and ethnic) should not be overlooked (Zelizer 2003: 62).

Throughout the wars and conflicts in the region, civil society organizations and various initiatives have had a vital role in arguing against war and violence, by encouraging reconciliation amongst different actors (along ethnic and religious lines) and fostering the resolution of conflict in a nonviolent/peaceful manner (Zelizer 2003: 62). Different interventions and experimentations took place in the Balkan region, varying from military intervention to peacebuilding experiments, including the imposition of forms of liberal peace. Among others, art-based peacebuilding approaches were popularly used for reconciling the divided society. Different artistic projects aimed at trauma healing and creative therapy, gathering youth, or purely educative exhibitions, have become an important part of the wider cultural and social scene in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is often supposed that such initiatives have positively contributed and influenced the social relationships and the functioning of some communities. Despite many such efforts, society in BiH is still highly polarized, ethnically and religiously segregated, and sustainable peace has not been achieved.

Artistic creations have a possibility to change and influence the discourse regarding peace and conflict, and can they offer new ways of analysis, in both novel non-verbal and verbal language (Woods 2002: 2). Arts projects can also elicit, incite, educate, contest, commemorate, romanticize and even reveal hidden truths (Woods 2002: 2). Yet the arts are malleable and are not innately oriented towards bringing about peace. Throughout the history of the Balkans, there have been numerous artists and artistic projects that have been used to reinforce and encourage nationalistic and chauvinistic discourse and ideologies, reinforcing larger divisions and even providing legitimation for brutal acts of violence in the national or ethnic cause (Wilmer, 2002; Kelly, 2000 as cited in Zelizer 2003: 63).

Even though extensive funds have been invested in post-conflict reconciliation projects regarding justice, peacebuilding and arts, a representative exploration and body of knowledge referring to this phenomenon is still missing (University of Arts London 2017; Borisenko 2016: 2). Furthermore, regardless of the implementation of art-based reconciliation and peacebuilding, throughout different projects, the clear intersection of art and conflict transformation in the academic literature is quite limited in regard to its theoretical underpinnings (Bergh & Sloboda 2010: 3), making the present study of great relevance.

### 1.3 Research questions

The main research question is as follows:

**On the basis of the War of Memories exhibition, can creative projects help or hinder wider peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Post-War BiH?**

In addition, there are three sub-questions which help to answer the main question and guide Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1. What are the assumptions guiding the War of Memories exhibition about reconciliation and peacebuilding in post-war BiH, vis a vis mainstream politics?
2. Has the War of Memories project activity of mapping monuments (translating into the exhibition) contributed to ethnic understanding within community relations as expected?
3. How do the main War of Memories project organizers, local partners and community members perceive the contribution of the project for peacebuilding and reconciliation?

## 1.4 Methods:

The present study is a qualitative study, consisting of a case study, with the aim of gaining a more in-depth understanding of the role of arts in peace-building. The choice of research methods was influenced by the notion, that qualitative research and semi-structured interviews can draw on the in-depth responses of interviewees, who together with the researcher help to make sense of a phenomenon and in a sense co-construct the analysis and meaning of their experiences (Jackson, Drummond and Camara 2007: 23). More specifically, different types of data sources were used to answer the research questions, including an emphasis on primary sources, relying on eight semi-structured interviews, and at times drawing on additional secondary sources, as the project publication that underlaid the ‘War of Memory’ exhibition, entitled: *Remembrance and Reconciliation: Research on Monuments from the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Franović 2016). The catalogue for the exhibition consisting of 51 selected images, was also used for analysis (in hard copy only).<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on the culture of remembrance and monuments, the catalogue consists of all of the images and captions, which were showcased in the ‘WoM’ exhibition. Through this catalogue, since the exhibition could not be visited physically, and through Centre for Non-Violent Action website material.<sup>3</sup> The choice of research methods, was influenced by the importance of capturing different views, and reflecting upon, to what extent the arts can help society critically examine what have been fed to them through both violent conflict and narratives of memory around violent conflict.

### 1.4.1 Interviews from three perspectives

The sampling strategy consisted of examining three different perspectives and experiences, first CNA staff, then community members (individuals who visited the exhibitions), and finally local organizers who contributed in facilitating and organizing the exhibition. It proved quite challenging to set up interviews – the staff of CNA are over-stretched and extremely busy. I contacted them several months in advance and was able to make appointments. I first interviewed two CNA women staff members in Belgrade, Serbia, and afterwards in Bosnia-Herzegovina I interviewed two further staff members of CNA, one man and one woman. From there I travelled to Tuzla, BiH, where I met with a female local organizer. Once finishing my trip in BiH, I met with a journalist, a community member who has went through the exhibition and recorded a podcast about the exhibition and lastly, I met two women in Kragujevac, Serbia a community member and a local organizer. The interviews being conducted in BCS (Bosnian/ Serbian/ Croatian), were time and energy-consuming, due to translation and transcription. Since this was a personal project as well as a research project, I will

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<sup>2</sup> Catalogue ‘Rat Sjecanja’, images can also be found at <https://kulturasjecanja.org/en/exhibition/>

<sup>3</sup> For an English version of the website see: <https://nenasilje.org/en/>

explain my relation to the research topic before describing the interview and other research methods in more details.

#### **1.4.2 Positionality: From where I stand**

As part of my methodology I have tried to reflect on my own position in relation to post-conflict peace-building and the arts in the Balkans. Despite living most of my life abroad, recently I have realized that I am intrigued about the conflicts which occurred in Former Yugoslavia. I came across some struggles, precisely when it comes to the events which took place, under what circumstances they occurred, and what the right step forward is both in reality and in terms of my research. For this reason, it made sense to draw on the local knowledge of CNA staff, audience and local organisers, to help contextualise the study. In the interviews and analysis, I have tried to be as sensitive and open to the topic as possible, since I was aware that I did not wish my ethnic, religious or cultural background to unconsciously influence the overall arguments in my work and the range of perspectives I would consider of interest. By interviewing a wide range of perspective, the idea was to do some justice to the complex topic of peacebuilding and reconciliation in BiH by including different views in the study alongside my own.

Another impediment that did cause some stress during the research process, was being aware of the specific socio-political particularities of my research, given my ‘belonging’ to a specific ethnic group identifiable by my name. I worried about how that would influence my overall research paper and the information I was likely to be given or draw from the images and exhibition text. Luckily when I was in the field, I did not come across any uncomfortable events related to my own ‘ethnic’ identity, and this helped me considerably in conducting interviews that proved to be both rich and extensive – producing transcripts that I translated into English, which resulted in a huge amount of direct material – around 100 pages – to analyse. Inevitably a lot of rich material could not be included here, and length limitations forced me to be selective in quoting the interviewees. I decided to focus on BiH, due to the project of interest, because of the current situation taking place, and my ability to speak the language. Perhaps because of my background as coming from Serbia, I preferred to work in BiH, and then to continually struggle with my fluid role of being both insider and at outsider at the same time. Even so, sometimes this has made it difficult for me to reach hard and fast conclusions. Perhaps that is not a weakness after all.

#### **1.4.3 Limitations**

The interviews were conducted in Serbian (my mother-tongue language), which I am not very comfortable communicating in, academically. As of this my questions and transcriptions might have been influenced by translation. I was granted the permission to record, which made the overall process easier, but which could have influenced the interviewees, since they agreed upon being identified within the paper, rather than staying anonymous.

### **1.5 Structure of Paper**

After this brief overview of the context of this study, the research questions, and the methodological choices I made, the next Chapter presents my theoretical stance and a critical literature review of theories of peace-building, reconciliation and the creative arts. Chapter 3 looks into the assumptions of the exhibition, addressing the first sub-question. After that in Chapter 4, I consider the images in the exhibition and draw out some analytical points and choose two key images to focus on. Before the conclusion, Chapter 5 returns to a more

general theme of the contribution the ‘WoM’ exhibition and similar arts projects for peace-building and reconciliation. The Concluding chapter summarises the key findings and proposes some recommendations.

## Chapter 2

### State of the ‘Art’: Some Theorising

#### 2.1 A Theoretical perspective on conflict transformation

In this chapter I first consider how peace-building and reconciliation have been theorised in relation to conflict transformation, and then I consider the role of creative endeavours in peace-building. This chapter provides the reader with the theoretical and conceptual tools used for the analysis in the chapters that follow.

The theoretical foundation for this study originates from the conflict transformation view of peacebuilding (with a focus on Lederach 1997; 2005). Likewise, the approach I will use is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning, reflected in my paper (Amineh & Asl 2015:13). Also, another important theoretical grounding will originate from memory studies, where debates about the use and abuse of memory, will be reflected upon.

Conflict transformation does not only focus on the termination of direct violence, but it is “concerned with transforming the systems, structures and relationships that give rise to violence and injustice”, and in that way is oriented towards positive peace (Psaltis, Carrettero and Čehajić-Clancy 2017: 2). Moreover, theories that are concerned with transformative processes, understand national and social identity and the representations of the past, as constructed (Psaltis et al., 2017: 2).

Even though there has been a change in nature of contemporary conflicts, it is evident that the representations of the history and the past remain being ‘weaponized’ for certain struggles (Bentrovato et al. 2016; as cited in Psaltis et al.,2017: 2). As of this, it is necessary to explore the insight gained from the field of peace and conflict research in regard to the importance of representations of the past and having in mind the possibility of manipulation (Psaltis et al., 2017: 2). To allow this process, it is necessary to methodically grasp “the process of conflict transformation, the influences exerted by the past and more specifically the contributions made by the field of social psychology” (Psaltis et al.,2017: 2).

Photographs "invite viewers to reflect not only on the status of photographic evidence, but also on their own relation to the reality it represents" (Taylor 1998: 5). As of this, the data will be analysed using analytical tools from media studies, such as the politics of representations and social relations of power (Hall 1997), and techniques such as framing, focalization (Žarkov 1997), will be used to unfold the visual messages and analyse the representation strategies and the meanings they could convey.

#### 2.2 Peacebuilding & Reconciliation

There are different approaches to peacebuilding, multiple definitions, characteristics and ideas about what it should entail (Cheng-Hopkins 2010: 5). A differentiation both in the literature and in practice exists between more top-down and more grass-roots, creative-based approaches, and among those informed by different peacebuilding theorization. This is clearly seen in practice in BiH, where different attempts and processes have been used for the purpose of ‘peacebuilding’. The notion of peacebuilding initially emerged in John Galtung’s (1976) ‘Three approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding’ publication (Gitau 2018: 34; Cheng-Hopkins 2010: 5). Furthermore, Galtung focused on the activities and mechanisms used for addressing “the root causes of violent conflict” (Gitau

2018: 34), arguing that peacebuilding is an effort to transform a situation, from a violent state to a state of positive peace (Lederach as cited in Gitau 2018: 34).

Peacebuilding came into existence in the foreign and international realm, in the Agenda for Peace in 1992, once the UN Secretary General, argued for the necessity to recognize and support beneficial structures for strengthening peace (Boutros-Ghali 1992; Gitau 2018: 34). Boutros-Ghali believed that post-conflict peacebuilding could avert the resurgence of conflict and violence amongst individuals and communities (1992). From then, the notion of peacebuilding has been refined and involves a higher range of measures and strategies aimed at the avoidance of conflict relapse (Gitau 2018: 35). Despite how peacebuilding has evolved, different academics and practitioners have undertaken and used the concept differently, both in a reductionist and minimalistic manner (Wyeth 2011: 2).

The conflict transformation school of peacebuilding offers a promising school of thought, which emphasizes the transformation of violent conflicts into peaceful ones (Paffenholz 2009: 5). The pioneer of the transformation-oriented approach John-Paul Lederach suggests that in a post-conflict society there is a need for rebuilding the demolished relationships, reconciling the society, and in that way, consolidating the potential for lasting peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2009: 5). The importance of local cultural, and support rather than interference in internal/local actor approach, is also acknowledged (Paffenholz 2009: 5).

Peacebuilding is a complex endeavour (Lederach 2005: 31), “a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable peaceful relationships” (Lederach 1997: X). The notion of peace is socially constructed, needing the process of construction and building (Lederach as cited in Gitau 2018: 37). Peacebuilding operations, primarily focused on institutions and state-building, with time have acknowledged the importance of conflict transformation (Kappler, 2012: 612), and the view that sustainable peace ought to be constructed at different levels of the society (Lederach 1997 as cited in Kappler, 2012: 612). Art-based peacebuilding has also been used as a tool for fostering peacebuilding and reconciliation, for example in Colombia, in Palestine, in BiH and in other societies that have experienced or are experiencing conflict. Even though there has been an increase in the body of knowledge concerning peacebuilding through the arts, such initiatives still have very mixed outcomes (Gitau 2018: 35).

One of the most prominent approaches in Contemporary and international peacebuilding, also generally mirrored in the UN definitions, is centred around the notion of Liberal Peace (Gitau 2018: 35), a more technocratic, top-down approach. Liberal peace, represented by the three pillars, representation, transnational interdependencies and respect for human rights (Doyle 2005: 463), has been used as the central approach to peacebuilding in BiH (Kappler and Richmond 2011: 263). As one could have expected, implementing this framework, and imposing the dominant L.P values, onto post-conflict BiH, did not always lead to the desired transformation, namely the creation of a liberal and multi-ethnic state. Local actors argued that the EU (actively involved in BiH affairs) and other external entities, emphasized certain external criteria, with very limited contextual awareness (Kappler and Richmond 2011: 263). Disappointment with the results of the LP approach can be attributed to the suppression of the local actors’ voices in the peacebuilding efforts (Kappler and Richmond 2011: 274). In BiH, the EU primarily consulted political elites and those in power, and in that way obscured the necessary contextualization of peace, preventing a sustainable and desired way forward (Kappler and Richmond 2011: 274). This did not lead to conflict transformation, since sustainable peace must be built from within, rather than it being an external imposition (Wyeth 2011: 11). Whoever has lived through conflict, and has had experience in peace-making activities, is aware that standardized blueprint formulas are inadequate for addressing the issue at hand (Lederach 1997: 23).



Some scholars argue that the experience of ethnic violence impedes any possibility of multi-ethnic cooperation, and that only physical separation of the opposing entities, given the intolerance amongst them, would make peace attainable (Blagojević 2007: 555-556). But in theory it is rather difficult to offer independence to different ethnic groups once conflict arises, since only if all parties agreed to this, it would be feasible to do so (Blagojević 2007: 555-556). What some scholars who favour such an approach fail to take into account is that the lack of relationships and direct contacts among communities can lead to even greater hatred and acts of dehumanization in the future (Blagojević 2007: 556). The contact theory argues that irrespective of the ethnic animosities, there is always the possibility of promoting closer inter-ethnic understanding and collaboration (2007: 556). Since different ethnic groups have coexisted in peace for decades previous to the outbreak of violence, such common ties are seen as rooted in a shared history (Blagojević 2007: 556).

Rather than separating different ethnic groups geographically and demographically, limiting any interaction among them, another possible way to change the situation for the better, is by working on the transformation of the relationships, from hostile and distant to productive and positive (Blagojević 2007: 556). This should not be done in a forceful manner, on the contrary it should be about choosing collaboration (2007: 556). Findings from different context, including BiH, depict the ability of individuals to achieve inter-group reconciliation, and therefore supports the notion that relationships can be transformed (Blagojević 2007: 556). An aspect which should be highlighted in post-conflict development in ethnically segregated countries, is reconciliation (2007: 557). Regarding reconciliation, it can be said that:

“Its primary goal and key contribution is to seek innovative ways to create a time and a place, within various levels of the affected population, to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with the present” (Lederach 1997: 37).

The desired approach to peacebuilding needs careful consideration, so it does not further intensify the ethnical divide and hatred, rather it should deconstruct the negative stereotypes, by reinforcing inclusion. Ideally, reconciliation should address both intolerance and ethnic hatred, by transforming the existent relationships throughout the different levels and dimensions of peacebuilding, ranging from political, physical, economic and to social/cultural transformations (Blagojević 2007: 559). Building peace through reconciliation should also ideally be implemented by numerous actors, throughout different levels of the society (2007: 559).

Antagonism and hostility amongst different groups, due to the experience of violence during conflicts has been passed on through generations (Lederach 1997: 23). Despite being neighbours previously, fear, negative stereotypes, and hostility can be present (1997: 23). Reconciliation tries to build on the mechanisms, which enable different sides of the conflicts, to engage with each other, and form relationships (1997: 26). A possible way of doing so, is involving individuals with various forms of creative/artistic endeavours.

Reconciliation "envision[s] protracted conflict as a system and focuses its attention on relationships within that system" (Lederach 1997: 26). It acknowledges that people should have the opportunity to express themselves, and share their trauma, grief and anger, accompanied by painful memory. Acknowledging and recognizing other stories, experiences, and emotions is decisive in fostering reconciliation (Lederach 1997:26), but that should be done in a careful manner.

Constructive dealing with the past is emphasized as critical for fostering sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation. International actors, local human rights activist and civil society organization in BiH, have stressed the importance and need for encouragement and promotion of processes within the society which focus on constructive dealing with the past

(Fischer and Petrovic-Ziemer 2013). A prominent example of this is the Hague Tribunal, in spite of being contested, it still remains one of the most-known measures (2013: 7).

The present has an influence on the past, and the past is reconstructed in line with the present context and identities, the past is manufactured, and not merely remembered (Kuljić 2006: 220). Nevertheless, the influence of political elites, to adapt what should be forgotten and remembered is something common in Former Yugoslavia, where the ones in power have upheld and encouraged a dominant common memory (Kuljić 2006: 220). The media has been misused by political nationalist leaders, as to manipulate the collective memory, and suppress or articulate specific narratives (Price 2003: 137). Memory and the past are “a framework of meaning, used by the society” to justify certain actions, and guide attitudes and behaviours (Kuljić 2006: 220). Furthermore, the memory and the past, have had a purpose of preserving identity and stability, throughout the processes of social change (Kuljić 2006: 221). It has been argued that managing memory can be of essence as a tool for conflict resolution and prevention (Price 2003: 137).

Memory “is thought to advance and validate identities, fuel grievances (and thus define enemies), give meaning and narrative coherence to individuals and collectivises” (Griffin, 2004 as cited in Kuljić 2006: 221). In BiH, there is a “competition of three official memory narratives and ethno-national identity constructions” (Moll 2013: 912). For example, the national memory of Croats, Serbs, encourages individuals to remember their own victims, rather than recognize their acts of violence (Blagojević 2006: 221). The national narratives have had the aptitude to form remembrance and make sense of the past (Sokol 2014: 104; Blagojević 2006: 222). The actors in power BiH, realized the importance of reinforcing a specific set of memories for their ethnic groups, as to sustain the support for those in power, where the television/media had the key role in this process (Price 2003: 143). These memories further reinforced the hostility, intolerance and hatred, leading to more violence (Price 2003: 143).

For sustainable reconciliation, it is essential to respond and point out the issues and dangers of the present culture of remembrance, since only a constructive way of dealing with the past, can lead to a better climate for future dialogue (Franović 2016: 204). “The culture of remembrance encompasses the ways we remember as a society and the ways we explain the past” (Vukosavljević 2014 as cited in Franović 2016: 204). Sustainable and stable peace cannot be attained if we do not start dealing and challenging the way we remember the past (2016: 226).

“When society has become sufficiently open and free to look back, from the point of view neither of the victim nor of the criminal, but of the critic, only then will the ghosts be laid to rest” (Buruma 2002 as quoted in Franović 2016: 226).

## 2.3 Creative endeavours<sup>4</sup> in Peacebuilding

Irrespective of the level of peacebuilding, the activities and processes should be aimed at tearing down negative structures, rather than strengthening and maintaining ethnic hostilities (Blagojević 2007: 555). Furthermore, it should be centred around the subjective needs of the individuals (Lederach 1997: 24). Many of the creative process and the art-based programmes in Bosnia-Herzegovina, have attempted to do this. Art-based peacebuilding is argued to be a

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<sup>4</sup> Once referring to art and creative processes, I am referring to different artistic endeavours from music to visual arts, and photographic exhibitions.

beneficial tool aimed at bringing different identity groups together (Zelizer 2003: 62), and for encouraging the awareness of the past, both necessary steps for reconciliation.

Shank and Schirch (2008:1) argued that for peacebuilding, arts can be a unique tool for transforming different types of conflict, from the interpersonal to the global (2008: 1). Furthermore, art can transform peoples' thoughts and influence their actions (2008: 2). The key task for peacebuilders is to discover strategic ways of including artistic processes into the work of peacebuilding (2008: 1). In this process, individuals should be able to express their thoughts and feelings and reconcile by engaging in artistic endeavours. A Strategic approach to art-based peacebuilding entails knowing when, what and how the arts (in a variety of forms) should be used, as to effectively address conflict, and contribute to peacebuilding (2008: 2).

Aware of the gap amongst the intersection between arts and peacebuilding, Zelizer (2003: 63), analysed the use of arts-based peacebuilding approach throughout different projects both during and after war in BiH. He argued for the importance of such approaches for rebuilding of the social ties and transforming relationships (2003: 65). Other than having the aim of rebuilding the social fabric, in BiH creative endeavours have had the crucial aspect of helping individuals of Sarajevo, who endured a traumatically long period of siege (Kollontai 2010:2 64). During the siege, it was reported that the many concerts, performances and other arts-based events which continued in the city, helped individuals raise their spirits and recover a sense of hope (Sarajevski 1996 as cited in Zelizer 2003: 65).

Evidence suggests that engaging in creative projects and different forms of art (theatrical performances, film, photographic exhibitions, music...) assisted children in rebuilding their self-image. Furthermore, it helped them overcome the negative beliefs and feelings of hatred directed towards other ethnic-religious entities (Kollontai 2010: 264). Involvement in such endeavours helped young people retain feelings of sanity and normality (2010: 264). Art also helped them envision the future and generate things which were beautiful (Interview from Sarajevo, 2009 as cited in Kollontai 2010: 264).

The positive contribution of creative endeavours can be observed in practice, for adults as well. The Pavarotti Music Centre, served to encourage and enable the communication between Muslims and Croats, in Mostar, an ethnically divided city (2003: 65). Another beneficial example is the Paleta Art Gallery in Sarajevo, which exhibited the paintings of students and local artists during the war (Kollontai 2010: 266). The public including children, met and witnessed the artistic paintings and reflected on their everyday reality through these images in which local artists expressed their experiences of the war and the imagined the future (Kollontai 2010: 266).

One cannot ignore the influence of different forms of art and creativity used for the context of BiH, as an attempt to affirm the multi-ethnic state of Bosnia-Herzegovina, to fight against its obliteration, and as a set of spaces where individuals could rejoice their feelings of shared belonging and identity (Kollontai 2010: 266). Art has been acknowledged as a beneficial tool aimed at helping individuals construct meanings of traumatic experiences (Kalmanowitz and Lloyed 2005: 24 as cited in Kollontai 2010: 262). Art is also said to have a role in the maintenance of friendships across different groups (2010: 262). In these creative spaces, individuals continued to meet in spite of the war and ongoing hatred of their ethnic-religious groups, "it was a place where we tried to recover some sense of normality and protest against the hatred that was trying to destroy friendships and families" (interview, Sarajevo, 2009 as cited in Kollotantai 2010: 265).

Likewise, artistic activities have been implemented as an instrument for uniting, educating and facilitating awareness in communities (Zelizer 2003: 65). Nonetheless, Kuusio stated:

“art can challenge our thinking in a post-conflict society and enable us to cross the barriers that divide us, it can reach new audiences since it doesn’t necessarily require a mutual language; instead it can be felt and seen” (2007: n.p.).

Even though art can be used as a tool for evoking the deepest and most sincere emotions, it can also become a dominant tool to decide which voices are being acknowledged, and which narratives are not. This is rather challenging, for reconciliation to occur, this needs to be approached carefully, since there are plural views present amongst different communities affected by war (Kussio 2007).

Kollontai (2010: 266) observed the polarization and nationalism while visiting Sarajevo in 2008-2009, where memories of the war were still a basis for anxiety for those who had experienced it, and even for the ones who were not born or present during the war. Nonetheless the external environment is a constant reminder of the bullets, bombs and people who have lost their lives (2010: 267). Therefore, it should be of no surprise that after the official end of war, art projects have taken place as to help in both mental and physical recuperation of the BiH youth.

“Healing the pain of war and building understanding, social trust and friendship between Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats continues into the new millennium as below the surface of their society lurks a very real possibility of further conflict” (Kollontai 2010: 267).

Being aware of this occurrence, means that projects are still ongoing providing support and education to the youth, instigating the importance of life (Kollontai 2010: 267). Besides, participating in creative projects, can be beneficial for individuals intellectual and psychological development, in terms of resilience and opposition of potentially imposing structures and actions, propagating inter-ethnic violence (2010: 267).

It is crucial for communities to sincerely engage with art and creative expression, since it can have the power to challenge the hegemonic narratives (Franović 2016: 226). “The arts are a powerful process for bringing groups together through a creative process, to help rebuild social relationships and at times engaging the community” (Zelizer 2003: 71). Arts can help and raise awareness of the consequences and risks of future conflict and propagate peace. In BiH, art-based processes helped individuals remain humane, and assisted in fostering interaction in an ethnically divided society, enabling reconciliation (Zelizer 2003: 72). More creative artistic processes should be incorporated for a sustainable post-conflict reconstruction, since they can serve as a pathway for healing and intergroups communication (2003: 72).

Similarly to Zelizer, the projects discussed in Kollontai’s work (2010:269), depict that arts have the ability to challenge and contest, ignorance, indifference and preconceptions. Furthermore, they can assist in transforming a conflict/war situation, into new situations where reconstructing and reconciliation happens, since through arts, individuals can develop the ability to envision something different, become self-aware, and have awareness of other people as well (2010: 269).

In conclusion, it seems from this review of the literature that artistic exhibitions like the ‘WoM’ exhibition, by portraying different images of the conflict: “can be a good catalyst for dialogue about the past, since suppression and forgetting are not the way to peace” (Ljevak 2016). Alibegović, who welcomed visitors into one of the ‘WoM’ exhibitions, said that there are different truths present, and blurred lines among the victim-perpetrators, nonetheless the meaning of the exhibition was to discover and contribute to a mutual truth (Ljevak 2016).

## Chapter 3

### Guiding assumptions of the ‘War of memory’

#### 3.1 Introduction

How one thinks, feels and perceives a situation and in this case an image has everything to do with who one is as an individual, one’s profession, ethnic background, experiences of war, gender, and many other aspects of a person’s identity and the social relations of power in which they are enmeshed (Hall 1997). As the eight individuals interviewed<sup>5</sup> came from different ethno-religious backgrounds, professions and countries, it is hoped this helps to ensure a diversity of perspectives, especially in relation to the present and very much divided reality of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The individuals interviewed are from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, they included two men and six women. Surprisingly perhaps, most said they have limited knowledge of the role of the creative arts projects in peace-building. Even the four CNA staff interviewed did not consider themselves as ‘experts’ in the field of arts and peace-building. Nevertheless, they had had the chance to be involved in the ‘WoM’ exhibition, in its curating and design. Yet this creative photographic exhibition was explicitly aimed at challenging the cultures of remembrance, consequently contributing to wider efforts of peacebuilding and reconciliation. As the CNA website header reads: “Building peace, crossing borders, learning from the past”<sup>6</sup>.

#### 3.2 The use and abuse of monuments and culture of remembrance/memory

As with every creative intervention, exhibition or process which takes places, there is a set of already formed assumptions influencing the overall project, as well as influencing the viewers’ interpretation of events (Hall 1997). Some of the main assumptions guiding this exhibition, were concerned with the problematic culture of remembrance and existing monuments which can be impediments for peacebuilding and reconciliation. Photographing the monuments and places of remembrance came out of the desire to point out these negative manifestations and reach a wide audience, as to be able to go forward<sup>7</sup>.

Based on the independent analysis, using politics of representation and visual analysis, as well reflecting upon the findings, rather than laying tribute and respect, monuments in BiH over history and time have been misused for nationalistic and manipulative quests. They have made other minority groups feel unsafe, completely disregarded their experiences, they have been one-sided and used for propaganda. And also, rather than respecting their victims they were used for personal/political/nationalistic gain.

Rather than memorializing the victims, monuments and their messages in the region, are used to point out the oppressors and their faults, depicting that even in pain and suffering we are similar (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). Her colleagues in Belgrade, added that there is a need to problematize these monuments, and the messages they convey. The case of Srebrenica was referred to, where they argue that the currently engraved description is very debatable, where ambiguity and openness to interpretation is not accidental. Additionally, many of the

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to the appendix for further details about the interviewees

<sup>6</sup> <https://nenasilje.org/en/about-us/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://nenasilje.org/en/category/activities/promo/>

monuments and their messages are calling for vengeance (Kožul-CM Interview). Nonetheless the engraved statement in the photograph below on the monuments, can perhaps serve as evidence to the above views.



Figure 1 - Caption on Monument in Srebrenica<sup>8</sup>

Caption: “In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate. We pray to Almighty God. May grievance become hope! May revenge become justice! May mothers’ tears become prayers. That Srebrenica, never happens again, to no one and nowhere”.

In this caption, revenge seems to be equated with injustice. Yet, within the particular location and under the socio-political particularities, it was read as implying that revenge could be a form of justice. Justice and revenge appear to be put into the same equation, leaving it to pure interpretation, revenge against whom, how, and with what means? Would justice take place through a court or more crime and revenge? My reading was that revenge was here being argued to be the same as justice in the monument. However, the inscription takes the form of St Francis’s well-known prayer, but how would Muslims and Orthodox Christians know this? Instead of implying transformation from revenge to justice, the inscription confused those who saw it. This reminds us that context is critical, and that:

“Depending on the artist/designer, the location, the shape, the audience and the surrounding socio-political discourses, memorials inspire and transform stories of war and peace” (Kappler 2017: 1).

Supportive of this occurrence, were the interview findings that many monuments across the region convey a variety of meanings, and hence can represent many things (Franović-CNA-SM and Milićević-CNA-SM, Interview, Jocić-LO, interview). As mentioned in the example above, this can have potentially negative implications for BiH, and overall peace and stability in the region. Another example depicting the variety of meanings, referred to in the interviews (Novalić and Turk, CNA-SM, Interview), is the roses in Sarajevo put in place in 1995, marking the places where bombs detonated. Interestingly, there is no official agreement about what these roses represent, whether it is a commemoration of the atrocities of the past, or if they promote a less violent future (Kappler 2017: 10). The roses trigger various reactions, from people passing by them, implying a necessity to move on, to others taking time and observing them, acknowledging what they experienced, and some just ignoring their existence (Kappler 2017: 10).

The focus on the roses is indicative of the situation in BiH, when it comes to memories and the different recollections of the past. Leaving the interpretation open can create a space for misuse and abuse of these monuments and places of remembrance, leading to one taking

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from <https://kulturasjecanja.org/izlozba/>

action into their own hands as deemed rightful. Frequently individuals presented as heroes in some areas in BiH, are considered war criminals in others (Božić 2017: 19). Across different cantons, and across the dominant majority groups (Croats /Serbs/Bosniaks), different armies and victims are commemorated (Sokol 2014: 108). As an example, in Republika Srpska certain acts of the Serbian army are celebrated, whereas in the BiH federation other acts are. These different acts are considered as crimes against humanity in the narrative of other ethnic groups.

The findings suggest, that war memorials and monuments are not solely aimed at expressing grief and memory conservation (Božić 2017: 1), this could be due to the underlying politics of representations and social relations of power among different individuals and communities and the way they engage with the monuments and the 'truth'. Rather than commemorating all the losses and acknowledging the crimes committed, monuments and places of remembrance can fuel ethno-nationalism and encourage the state of negative peace, by blaming and supporting monolithic narratives.

The monuments and memorials are usually seen as a display of ethnic intolerance, tending to uphold the collective memory and focusing on rather subjective ways of remembrance, by perpetuating the strong ethnic identity, which can have considerable implications for peace, and reconciliation (Božić 2017: 3; Price 2003: 141). These monuments depict the problematic situation within Yugoslavia, where both during and in the aftermath of war, ruling class and political elites, have tried to reinforce a common memory (Kuljić 2006: 220) pertaining to specific ethno-religious groups and identities.

As for this, the photographs in the exhibition, have the potential to show that all these monuments do have something in common, and that all sides committed crimes. Furthermore, as argued:

"there is an importance in depicting and showing that not all monuments which are being built have to be in function of peacebuilding, there is a tendency in these monuments to affirm our victimhood, justify our crimes, condemn others and to give limited, if any, attention to other victims and bleeding hearts" (Jocić-LO, Interview).

This exhibition tried to initiate a conversation, and highlight certain topics, as to assist people in critically looking at the monuments, which could be of use the next time someone would like to build a monument (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview). It unravels the stories concerning the monuments, which have been built after war, and what kind of messages these monuments send, such as if they further intensify the hostility or if they contribute to the culture of building peace (Jocić-LO, Interview). Nonetheless, as evident from the interviews, monuments have different purposes and meanings in public spaces, from conveying and transferring the dominant narrative and messages to the community, marking the territory, depicting power, but also for provoking the other, and keeping the other away (Dragičević-Šešić 2011: 33). These monuments rather than being used for transformative processes, they have been used to affirm national identity, and represent the monolithic imposed view of past events (Psaltis et al., 2017: 2). Regardless of the lack of overt violence, it is evident from these monuments and their messages, that the conflict has still not been transformed, as well as the existing structures, systems, and relationships that instigate violence (Psaltis, Carretero and Čehajić-Clancy 2017: 2). Politicians who perpetuated violence are still in power, the educational curriculums are still polarized, and individuals continue to elect their representatives by nationalistic/ethnic lines, indicating that existent polarization.

Many of the monuments emerged after the war, so it is of essence to showcase this exhibition, since these monuments are emerging without a plan, it's not even politics (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview), the problem is in our culture, and how we imagine what a monument should entail (Milićević-CNA-SM, Interview). For that, there is the necessity to have

some sort of religious or ethno-nationalist mark right on the monument (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview). Throughout BiH, monuments emphasizing religious, ethnic and nationalistic symbols, have been made in locations where past atrocities had occurred (Sokol 2014: 108). Most of these monuments, irrespective of the ethnic group, were built after the war with the idea “to remember and never forget” (Sokol 2013: 108). Contrary to the belief, that it is not politics, the effort of the political elite to foster a common memory and narrative, implicitly translated to almost every municipality after the war. The emerging memorial and monumental plaques had a purpose of commemorating military and civilian victims of only one ethno-national entity of the war (Sokol 2014: 107), which in essence very political. Bozic (2017: 19), argues that: “unless ethnic symbols are freed from the past, it will be difficult for the Bosnian citizen to critically look at war memorials and related memory narratives”.

The conflict has not been successfully transformed in BiH, for conflict to truly transform certain existent structures and systems perpetuating violence need to be replaced, and national identity should ideally be reconstructed (Psaltis et al., 2017: 2). It is of essence to challenge the past and the imposed memories, since they are repeatedly referred to by society as a framework of meaning, translating into one’s behaviour (Kuljić 2006: 220). Hence, it should be of no surprise that Franović (CNA-SM, Interview) said that: “...as already assumed and now discovered - we have a problem with the culture of remembrance that is ethnocentric, one-sided, which deals with who our enemy is”.

Franović and Milićević (CNA-SM-Interview) argued that the approach to remembering is problematic, where we do not remember the victim, we simply forget about them. There is a danger in leaving things as they are, something the CNA noticed, both in their research and throughout their activities. The ‘unresolved’ past is still influencing the present in different ways, and the use of memory, which the CNA is trying to point at, can be beneficial for conflict prevention (Price 2003: 137), but can also be misused for conflict resurgence. Besides, hostility in post-conflict scenarios, has been commonly passed on across generations (Lederach 1997: 23), despite of the previous peaceful cohabitation and friendship, depicting that, manipulated or not, memory can authenticate identities, helps make meaning of that past and influence behaviour (Sokol 2014: 104).

“Moreover, this exhibition can link certain bridges that were broken during the wars, it connects to victims from all sides, and it points to the fact that there is a huge problem, reflected in name of the exhibition, because the war is formally finished, but there are various other methods that are less bloody, which in the future can be much more dangerous than the actual use of weapons... and that is the memory which has been imposed, and which can escalate tomorrow” (Kožul-CM, Interview).

What the findings of the interviews, website content and research publication on monuments are suggesting, is that the openness to interpretation and ambiguity is present across most of the monuments built after the war, hence influencing the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. The openness to interpretation often leads to the misuse and abuse of the memory, sometimes for the purpose of instigating even greater division, a lack of cooperation and unwillingness to acknowledge the other’s pain and suffering, rather than supporting reconciliation, understanding and empathy. It needs to be acknowledged that the monuments themselves, can cause more harm than good, by only reinforcing personal victimhood and other’s wrongdoings, affecting the prospect of a better future. This exhibition is a necessary intervention aimed at challenging these narratives and pointing out the existing problematic social relations of power marked by ethnic relations.

“This exhibition is a creative effort to make the changes and influence the narratives, since peacebuilding is impossible without constructive dealing with the past. The approach to remembering is problematic essentially, since there is a focus to transfer the hatred and animosity with an ethnic prefix across generations” (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview).



In conclusion, this exhibition connects all of the victims/survivors by showing that everyone suffered, and that everyone has a pretty evident problem, which is present in the name of the exhibition, a war between the memories, and different ways individuals want to remember (Kožul-CM, Interview). If dealt with cautiously, memorials, monuments and places of remembrance can be a place of dialogue, mutual respect and compassion rather than what they represent now, potential grounds for conflict revival.

### **3.2 War is not worth it, relationships should be built!**

Irrespective of the one-sided and narrow representations of monuments and places of remembrance, by showing that this is common across BiH, the creators of the exhibition have presented the exhibition as a potential space to argue against war. Their work exemplifies this, by spreading messages that war is not worth it, and trying to rebuild community relations. Milićević (CNA-SM, Interview) argued that this exhibition has an anti-war message “that the war is evil, and that there is no just war, there are no victims who have lost their lives for some interest, the WAR is evil”. But does this potentially mean that those who took part in the war are evil as well? Since there is a lack of such reflection in the interviews, where politics is blamed mostly, and individual’s responsibility of engaging in such activities is not mentioned.

Memorials and monuments can have implications for relationship-building, both positive and negative. Therefore, reflecting upon the situation and what can be done in the future in terms of memorials and monuments, can contribute to relationship-building.

“Rather than them separating us and trying to present our pain as the sole one, we can unite in our pain and live in agreement and respect, since this is the only way to go forward. A victim is a victim...the victim has no name at all...we are all mourning for our victims, and we need to unite in that pain, and stop accusing each other. We cannot forget our losses, but we can forgive, together we can and should mourn and acknowledge every victim, and place where atrocities had happened, but until politicians are in charge of the media, I believe it is very hard (Avdić-LO, Interview).

But what is in the way and makes forgiving not as simple and informs the monumental culture (places of remembrance as well), is the power of the chosen traumas. In BiH, the common mental representation of the traumatic past occurrences among different groups reflect the experienced humiliation, life loss and embarrassment during conflict from the other entity (Volkan 2001: 86). As for this, individual chosen traumas reflect the groups’ implicit choice to incorporate an event from the past to the core of their identity, and despite experiencing other traumatic events too, the chosen traumas remain strong over time; they have a function and are used as a linking point for individuals within the group (Volkan 2001: 86-89). As of this, forgiving, can also feel like erasing a part of the identity which has been firmly formed and used as a reference of meaning.

Similarly, despite of the anti-war messages being conveyed both during and in the aftermath of the war, in concerts and creative arts endeavours (Sarajevski 1996 as cited in Zelizer 2003: 65), by civil society organizations and various initiatives (2003: 62) the violence still found its place:

“there are photographs of cemeteries, memorials, monuments depicting that war is not worth it, it is important to me that in some way we warn people about what kind of inheritance they leave and set for their children, which I do not think people thought about when they did it, most of them they did not think about what it means to some people who will be born 30 years from now” (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview).

Only if this reflection happens on a wider scale, with memorials and exhibitions of this type relationship building can be instigated, since the only way forward in the context of BiH, is through relationships and sense of community - but when and under which conditions this will happen remains a mystery.

### **3.3 War of memory exhibition vis a vis Politics in the region**

When asked about how the exhibition stands in respect to mainstream politics (formal politics), there was a consensus, that the main messages of the exhibition are not in line with the current politics. In the region, art and culture have very little significance, because of that, these art projects, no matter how important they are, have little effect. Because politics is predominant “artistic, cultural aspects, by definition, should reconcile us, in the culture, a factor of reconciliation should be sought” (Vujošević-CM, Interview). There is an unutilised potential of the of art and creative endeavours ability to counterbalance politics of fear and hate, once thought-through carefully.

“When it comes to mainstream politics, as soon as something negative is mentioned, the narrative of reconciliation, and the future is brought up, as not to reveal much about who did what and who is responsible. The exhibition is not completely against mainstream politics, it is also future oriented, but CNA wants it with clear and open cards, because indeed I really think that our future is not bright, and certainly not if we continue doing the same” (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview).

Moreover, the exhibition is provoking and subversive, in comparison to the governing politics and the dominant discourse which depicts our people, our nation as the ‘affected nation’, rarely putting our crimes at the forefront (Jocić-LO, Local Organizer). The exhibition makes you talk about yourself as a killer and/or a victim, it means both one and the other – both as the aggressor and the victim, therefore it does not go in line with the dominant discourse - us as victims, them as perpetrators (Jocić-LO, Local Organizer). Additionally, Jocić added, that once invited to the exhibition in Kragujevac, Serbia, the political party representatives refused to come to the opening, possibly because they perceived the ‘WoM’ exhibition, as opposing to the politics they lead.

The division in BiH society, which was reinforced by the war, and particularly from the politicians, who are still in power in both Republika Srpska, and the federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, has very strong consequences for society and peace attainment. They have and still are promoting a common memory, with the use of media and nationalist leaders, and are manipulating how individuals remember collectively (Kuljić 2006: 220; Price 2003: 141). The importance of this, is reflected in the need to retain the support of the public, which is done by strategically using the chosen traumas. The politics in the region, now and during the war has set out to deny personal acts of violence as much as they can, while overemphasizing their victimhood.

As long as there are national parties the society will remain poor in every possible aspect, the nationalistic attacks against our society have overtaken the society in BiH (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview & Avdić-LO, Interview). Additionally, the local and state authorities are playing games by emphasizing personal loss and not considering other’s causalities, it’s a morbid game, of competing with the higher number of victims (Kožul-CM, Interview).

The photos in the exhibition have the ability to point to this type of problem within the existing monuments and the imposed memory (Kožul-CM, Interview). As Avdić (LO, Interview) and Turk (CNA-SM, Interview), who both reside in BiH point out, the exhibition goes against this rule and divide of politics:

“if you are a conscious individual, you are different than when you came in, everyone who has some grain of salt in the head, and a little bit in the heart, is actually able to disrupt the whole narrative” (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview).

Importantly, the effort of CNA is not against society, but rather against the politics, that is destroying the societies and the idea and the possibility of a community in the future, since there are alternatives (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). The findings suggest that CNA is working towards challenging the dominant power relations in society, by propagating an emancipatory type of politics, which is evident throughout their work and in the exhibition.

## Chapter 4

### The images in the exhibition

#### 4.1 Understanding of the Exhibition and the images

As some of the interviewees opinioned, the exhibition has a future oriented character, because there is a reliance on people who are coming to the exhibition, as for this it should be of no surprise that the message of 'future through the constructive past and present' has emerged throughout the interviews, their publications and their website. As with other projects, this exhibition had a clear structure and order of presentation of the 51 photographs (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview; Turk-CNA-SM, Interview), based on the logic and assumptions of the organizers. Milicevic (CNA-SM, Interview) argued that there was a strategy aimed at triggering people to think and reflect what the photographs represent, their meaning and for whom these monuments, places of remembrance, memorial rooms, and unmarked places, are intended for. Supportive of Milicevic's view, Shank and Schirch argue, that artistic endeavors can lead to transformation in individuals thought processes, translating into behavior (2008: 2), furthermore once engaging in these activities findings from BiH, depict that individuals from different ethnic groups were able to overcome antagonism (Kollontai 2010: 264), engage in communication despite the ethnically segregated reality, and look forward to a better-looking future (Interview from Sarajevo, 2009 as cited in Kollontai 2010: 264).

Having experience in organizing and facilitating dialogues, workshops and trainings in different places, and being exposed to different narratives within certain contexts, Franović (CNA-SM, Interview) assumed, that the reactions probably differed across different areas. Interestingly, her colleague in Sarajevo, based on the few exhibitions she has visited said that one of their biggest gains was no difference in emotional reaction throughout different contexts, "I do not know, or even remember, that I met a person, that was not moved, in a sense it expands your consciousness, and shows you that this war is the worst evil" (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). Despite a picture being worth 1000 words, Avdić (LO, Interview) recognized that "it all depends on how one experiences the picture, and what emotions the pictures arouse". This stands in line with the idea, that certain audiences of individuals share cultural codes (Hall 1997), therefore certain social relations/relations of power are distinct to cultural perspectives, or geographical areas and their lived experiences, influencing one's way of thinking, interpretation and their overall mindset (Hall 1997: 21-22). Then, in the context of BiH and Serbia, it would make sense that certain images did yield different reactions, due to the existing preconceptions, narratives and the culture of remembrance related to the war. Furthermore, there were plenty of people who visited the exhibition in Tuzla alone, over 2,000 people have passed by. Even though the exhibition did not show explicit violence, it showed places where wars were fought, where civilians endured torture and uncertainty, and where the houses were ruined, it had a deeper meaning, suggesting that there was not only material damage, but mostly importantly the loss of human life (Jocić-LO, Interview).

The photographs and their messages have shaken a visitor to the heart, even though she has memories of the painful war experiences, and despite being sheltered, she was profoundly moved, emotionally and psychologically. In Vujošević's (CM, Interview) case, once seeing the exhibition, the photographs helped her become aware of how much the emotions and wounds relating to war and the past, are deeply repressed, and if one is to scratch a little, they open and bleed. This stands in line with different literature emphasizing the significant role

of creative arts in peacebuilding, to engage with the true emotions and the heart (Kollontai 2010: 269).

The aim of the exhibition was to awaken such reflection, not to be one-sided, but open the floor for everyone to think about those places of memory according to their age, past knowledge, emotions, and education (Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview). Despite the image with two teddy bears on top of a grave possibly being a cliché unethically fishing for emotions, it was referred as the most moving by all interviewees, and even led to two of the interviews having to stop and take a couple of breathes, since it teared them up.



Figure 2 - Last image in the exhibition<sup>9</sup>

“These teddy-bears on the grave of a little boy, help the viewers reach the cathartic moment, Since throughout the show people are having thoughts, dilemmas, and justifications, but in front of this photo...it’s just pure tears...it is clear that this child does not have a name, a nationality, no last name has anything to determine because it is a child, a child”(Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview).

A lot of innocent children, not responsible for anything, who did not get a chance to start living their lives, have been killed from all sides (Avdić-LO, Interview). This last image had the strongest effect, since there the visitors are confronted with children as innocent casualties, making the image inerasable (Vujošević-CM, Interview). Furthermore, Franović (CNA-SM, Interview) believed that various things have attracted attention, but that the last image in a sense closes the whole process, of what has been done and what can happen, if we continue in the same way.

Visual installations such as this one, have a possibility to point out to the currently problematic monumental culture and culture of remembrance prevailing in the social fabric in BiH. But, as will be discussed further in the chapter, some of the problems of exhibition of this type, concerns their inability to reach the ‘target’ audiences, and therefore translate into greater practical gains.

Besides, Milicevic (CNA-SM, Interview) pointed out that what is present in the photographs “are the consequences of the war, there is a lack of remembering the victims, but actually these victims are used as a mean to perpetuate further war”, therefore the present monuments are also used a means of further war and violence. Monuments which emerged

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from: <https://kulturasjecanja.org/izlozba/>

after the war, were created with certain preconceptions, such as to collectively remember, rather than disremember (Sokol 2013: 108). Bringing awareness to such an occurrence, was also one of the objectives of the exhibition.

What makes this exhibition different is that it was born out of the research and the projects which were conducted over time with war veterans (Turk-SM, Interview). Exhibiting photographs of the monuments, was a way for more people to see it, since the main way to initiate change, is to confront individuals with something by raising awareness (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview). Supportive of their statements, are findings that using artistic endeavors such as the 'WoM' exhibition and photography can be used as an effective tool for bringing individuals together, educating and raising awareness throughout different communities (Zelizer 2003:65), translating into wider peacebuilding efforts. Other than that, what was also reflected within the interviews, was that this exhibition was set out to disrupt and tackle some of the damaging one-sided narratives, by putting some things out in the open, and depicting the different sides.

## 4.2 Analysis of images, politics of representations

The previous chapter dealt with the assumptions from the project organizers point of view, in this section I will test the previously mentioned assumptions, by analyzing two images, which have left a strong impression on me and were exhibited in the WoM exhibition. Both of the images are from the WoM exhibition catalogue, since unfortunately I was unable to attend any of the exhibitions, as it was not showcasing in the summer period.

All the images are presented in a black-white tone. This might have been done so, as to reflect the de facto dichotomous interpretation of the history and reality in the region commonly interpreted as black and white, one narrative vs the other, us vs them, and victim vs perpetrator. In spite of the dominant monolithic narratives in BiH, the photographs in the exhibition show that the reality, is far from black and white, all sides suffered, and there is no winner in the war. Perhaps, the black and white can point to the future-oriented character, by depicting that even though the different monolithic narratives and history was construed as black and white, the future does not have to be, BiH can go beyond the clear ethno-religious identity. Rather than presenting the images with color, and making the experience as more vibrant and attractive, the black-white images represent the doomed scenario. It can be associated with the old times, as a strategy aimed at trying to influence you to leave events in the past, and make you feel as if you are looking at something old, which can be confronting in a way. People can give color in the future, but it's their choice to choose how they do so.

There is a very specific formatting of the images, where certain things are put in focus, in comparison to certain things being blurred, and completely disregarded (Žarkov 1997). This is not accidental, in this case and in general when it comes to photographic representation, since there is symbolic meaning to it, in terms of the chosen 'truth', which usually reflects the chosen focus. A possible remark on the overall selection of images, would be that there were very few human faces present in the selected photographs. Most of the images have assumed neutrality, and this might have been done as to appeal to wider audiences in BiH, and the region, rather than specific entities of individuals.



Figure 3 - Last image in the exhibition<sup>10</sup>

If one were to look at this image (Figure 3) without knowing the context of BiH, it could be observed that this is a destroyed or badly maintained building. The above image speaks of how context is of great relevance in our everyday life, and especially in peacebuilding. This image portrays one of the many buildings, which were damaged and extensively destroyed by the war, under the Siege of Sarajevo (1992-1995), under the army of Republika Srpska. In new Sarajevo, such buildings depict the effects of the war, and are currently inhabited by members of the community. These buildings and the external environment serve as an everyday reminder of the traumatic events and violence which occurred, feeding into the already existent memories (Kollontai 2010: 266).

In Serbia demolished governmental buildings from the NATO 1999 bombing, are still evident. Similarly, in both cases, the current state of the buildings, and their photographs depict the ugly and severe consequences of the war, still affecting the countries everyday life. The meaning of these occurrences is reconstructed through education, manipulation of the media and the educational curriculum and as a result influencing the everyday experiences of individuals in BiH society.

This solitaire, which clearly depicts the effects of the shooting and the bombs, serves as a (unconscious / conscious) reminder that the Serbs, were the perpetrators responsible for the crimes committed against the Bosniak Muslims, women, men and children. This image stands as evidence and acknowledgment to the atrocities which had occurred. As with every other image in the exhibition, rather than eliciting only positive emotions and responses, it can also tap into different narratives, different ethno-religious, mainstream political and peacebuilding-oriented ones as well. It has the ability to also bring out different emotions, translating into unknown implications for the situation in BiH.

With this image the organizers tried to insinuate, that war is not worth it, and that it can cause long-lasting damage, material, psychological, sentimental and overall societal, which

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<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from the 'Rat Sjecanja' Catalogue of 51 showcased images;

prevails many years after the official termination of open violence. The organizer's intentions in presenting these images, was to try and move people to reconciliation and peacebuilding. These images serve as a warning that this can happen again, if we don't make changes about the way we remember (CNA-SM, Interviews).

The caption next to this exhibited photograph states that: "during the war in New Sarajevo all buildings have been ruined or demolished. In the base of the solitaire, which tells a lot about the war which had occurred, there is a typical monument, to the deceased members of 'Armije BiH' (BiH Army), located also in other parts of the city" (Image Catalogue, WoM).

"The meaning is constructed by the system of representation" (Hall 1997:21). In spite of the caption neutrality, when it comes to the social relations of power, at a Bosniak level and at the level of individuals who felt, and first-hand experienced the Siege of Sarajevo, being the targeted ethnic group, the message in the image can be interpreted differently. Bosniaks can relate to this image at different levels, it can bring back memories of them being victims/survivors of terrible crimes from their neighbors and once friends, and that the effects and consequences are pertinent in their daily lives. Rather than fostering feelings of reconciliation and the need to work on rebuilding the damaged relationships, this image can also lead to emotions such as anger, fear and hostility diverting peacebuilding efforts and refueling the unhealed wounds. Or perhaps for more conscious individuals this image together with other photographs presented, can show that yes atrocities happened, but other's also experienced atrocities. From the level of Serbian individuals, this can help them realize that certain crimes were committed on their behalf, and that their ethnic groups were responsible for atrocities, and irrespective of the reasoning behind it, innocent lives were lost. Perhaps this image would be easier to relate to, since Serbians also experienced bombings and know the harm it causes.

And to conclude, politics-wise, the political elite want the people to remember in a particular way. And this is evident, since despite the inflow of investments and donations from the international community, these buildings still remain the same after 20+ years after the war, in the capital city. Many of these buildings are still standing and remain unrepaired. This is a clear political statement about the past, which can be used as a basis for further ethnic propaganda, pushing through ethno-nationalist feelings, and using what Bosniak Muslims experienced for future animosity and partition, on both sides. Both during and in the aftermath of the war, political efforts were known for imposing the dominant narrative and common memory (Kuljić 2006: 220; Price 2003:141). This was done by overstressing one-sided personal loss and experiences, and the other wrong-doings and lack of victimhood (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview).





Figure 4 - Reflection of the war veterans observing a war memorial exhibition in Srebrenica<sup>11</sup>

The other image (Figure 4), is centered around a frame, and depicts the reflection of war veterans, from warring sides, their faces are the centre of attention, with the cracked and damaged white wall in the remaining part of the image. Their facial expressions are ambiguous, and at points they look sad, but then at another just blank. The emotions are not easily readable from the image. This reflects the reality, since there are so many different emotions people experience once Srebrenica/other inhumane acts are mentioned, due to the different particularities involved. The white cracks rather than simply being present, can insinuate that even though the event happened in the past, the painful memories are still present in BiH society.

This is the only image in the exhibition, with actual faces, the lack of presenting faces might have been a strategy to maintain neutrality, and not to point fingers at the people who committed the crimes, but rather to create awareness that there is a problem with the present culture of remembrance, irrespective of who is responsible for the crimes. The text under the image says, “reflection in the glass of ex-soldiers Armije BiH and Army of the Republika Srpska, observing together, the exhibitions in the memorial centre in Srebrenica”. This image insinuates that we need to recognize the atrocities from the past, and that we are today in power, as these two men to do something about peace, we have a choice. Clearly defining who is in the picture and mentioning that they are observing the memorial centre exhibition together is very strategic. It shows that people from warring ethnic sides, even the soldiers who were instructed to kill one another, can now together in peace commemorate the loss of lives. This was also reflected in an interview statement “all victims are the same, and we are all mourning, we should try and unite in the pain, rather than accuse each other” (Avdić-LO, Interview).

When analyzed using social relations of power the same image can have different meanings to different ethnic groups (Hall 1997), for a Bosniak this image can feed into some already developed narratives, that their suffering and Srebrenica and other atrocities against them were terrible and forgiveness should not just be granted. But then again it can also evoke feelings of content, that the perpetrator pays respect, despite the political contestations amongst the Serbs, and by doing so actively contributes in building the bridge of peace for the future. But on the contrary, this can also cause greater feelings of hostility,

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: <https://kulturasjecanja.org/izlozba/>

since just visiting the memorial site of Srebrenica, and being there with a former rival, does not erase the history, and does not make anything better (especially when there is a disagreement about it being a genocide). Possibly it may be considered as a manipulation from the Serbian side, believing more needs to be done from their behalf.

For Serbs this image can elicit different meanings, as an example, the presence of an ex-soldier representing the Serb community, can translate into Serbian individuals being mad and unsatisfied with their implications of their presence at the memorialization, and as of that strengthen certain negative feelings of rage, unease and discomfort. Or perhaps it can positively contribute and this image can also have the power to show, that the Serbian war-veteran, is there to give respect to the people who have lost their lives, and that is a message we should take forward, different crimes happened but as hard as it is, we need to acknowledge what we did, and that there were casualties. Therefore, feelings of compassion, understanding, and regret can be evoked, for the conscious and aware members of the community.

Lastly, when it comes to politics, this image goes against what has been happening in the ICTY tribunals, as this image presents members of warring sides, supporting peace efforts, and being together in a highly contested place. Something which was not the case throughout the court proceedings. This image also highlights the gendered aspect of war in BiH, reflected in all of the cases in the ICTY tribunal both tried and convicted cases, where a female was never indicted for any crime. Possibly this image can be beneficial for the political elites from both sides, since it depicts 'cooperation' and desire for peace, one of the prerequisites for gaining European Union memberships, something both countries are actively 'trying' to achieve.

## Chapter 5

# Can creative projects contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation?

### 5.1 Are creative projects sufficient for making a lasting change?

Despite different *relations of power*, coming from diverse ethnic, religious, professional, and gender backgrounds and affected by the war disproportionately, among the eight interviewees there was a general agreement that arts can contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation. Findings in BiH, support this by depicting that art-based initiatives have been used for rebuilding relationships, amongst others (Zelizer 2003; Ljevak 2016; Franović 2016; Kollontai: 2010; Shank and Schirch 2008; Kussio 2007; Shank and Schirch 2008; Kalmanowitz and Lloyd 2005; Zelizer :2003;), but only up to a point. Nevertheless creative-based projects alone are insufficient for attaining reconciliation and building sustainable peace. There are numerous other things coming into play, such as the audience, use and abuse of creative material, and also promoting systemic change

The complex nature of peacebuilding (Lederach 2005: 31) calls for different approaches, similarly rather than simply relying on a particular line of work, the exhibition is not an isolated case, but it is part of a series of activities and work with war veterans (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview). Most of the interviewees, said that for peacebuilding and reconciliation to happen, certain conditions need to be fulfilled, such as being a rounded story (creative arts happening with other activities). Nonetheless, the work of CNA entails a range of different activities and strategies (working with the war veterans, organizing educational workshops, trainings, and art as a medium) all aimed at building peace and learning from the past (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview). In doing so, they are encouraging reconciliation amongst different actors (along ethnic and religious lines) and fostering the resolution of conflict in a non-violent or peaceful manner (Zelizer 2003: 62).

Despite art being rarely applied in the region, Jocić believes that it “definitely contribute extensively”, since it is easier for individuals to absorb the messages through creative/artistic messages and exhibition pieces rather than through a boring political story (Jocić-LO, Interview). She argued that it is an important channel of communication, requiring a multidisciplinary approach, relying on visual, audio aspects, emotional as to attract the audience (LO, Interview). In both the research documentation and photography, a very large number of people were involved, which helped reach certain places, and take photographs, which would have not been possible without them (Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview & Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). The CNA processes and activities consist of working with local input (Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview), rather than imposing their viewpoints/control. The focus on local and internal inputs rather than external interference (Paffenholdz 2009: 5), is essential for peacebuilding efforts in BiH (Lederach 2005:31). Additionally, by doing so, all the diverse processes, administered by CNA are aimed at transforming the conflict and contributing to peaceful relationships, and learning from the past for a better future (Lederach 2005: 31).

By offering the exhibition and such creative endeavors to the public, there is a possibility that negativity and hostility amongst different ethnic groups can be reduced (Kollontai 2010:264), since these initiatives can inspire communication (Zelizer 2003: 65). Furthermore,

the exposure to artistic endeavours has also been associated with greater awareness, understanding and feelings of togetherness within communities (Zelizer 2003: 65). “If there wasn’t any contribution, the exhibition showcasing would have been stopped by now” (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). The individuals need to be exposed to this kind of information, since these exhibitions can bring the consequences of the war closer to individuals, which is in essence building peace (Nedžad-CNA-SM, Interview).

The CNA, therefore with this exhibition, and beyond have actively worked on transforming the relationships from antagonistic to constructive and respectful, necessary for effective conflict transformation and peacebuilding (Blagojević 2007: 556). They have conducted activities, which resulted in war veterans and community members choosing cooperation (Blagojević, 2007: 556), and promoting the message of peace. Furthermore, the experience of working with war veterans stands evidence to this. In this example, a diverse group of war veterans, visited both marked and unmarked places of suffering, from all the ethnic groups in BiH, as to give their tribute. The willingness of once active combats and now war veterans, thought of as heroes in their local communities, in assisting in organizing the exhibition, is a great indicator of how it influenced them and how they want to influence their communities. Their involvement in the projects can have translatable implications for the collective identity as well, and the idea that ‘we’ should move forward in peace.

The exhibition opens the door for future efforts and themes, which are not so easy to open, like the willingness of individuals to take you to places of suffering which haven’t been marked (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview). Therefore, even if the contribution/impact is at an individual level, and helped at least one war veteran, it is important, since they are a part of the community (Kožul-CM, Interview; Novalić and Turk-CNA-SM, Interview)

Art together with different processes can tackle, assess, and measure individual change necessary for peacebuilding, but what about systematic change? Is there even a way to assess that? This is something many of these publications in BiH and beyond, have failed to take into account; yes, creative projects can do many things, but as mentioned in the previous chapter these creative endeavours are not disassociated from monumental culture, the culture of remembrance or the politics, which at all times are not oriented towards building peace.

“This exhibition is crucial, because it shows that it is possible to openly criticize something, but to keep the necessary dose of respect towards it, in a way that does not disrespect those monuments, nor those people for whom the monuments have been raised” (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview).

Lastly, due to aiming for lasting change, the satisfaction associated with youth/student visits and their engagement at the exhibitions, was brought up by all representatives of the three groups. This could be due to the general belief, that peacebuilding and peace education should be an intergenerational process, challenging the existing social relations of power. Particularly in the case of BiH and Serbia, where intergenerational passing of hostility has been evident, the presence of children at the exhibitions, depicts the importance of collaboration and acceptance across different structures and systems, working together at different levels, which is desirable for effective peacebuilding (Lederach 2005). The interviewees have emphasized, that in order for schools to organize visits, there must have been cooperation and authorization from ‘above’. Particularly in the case of BiH and Serbia, the fact that the established institutions, allowed for this to happen, is nothing but positive, and hopeful.

This is significant because schools are places of socialization and if you can catch this new generation of students at an early stage or even challenge ethnically segregating viewpoints while they are still developing, you are socialising them for peace, reconciliation, and for lasting change. This is reflected in one of the statements from the interviews, saying that

children who visit the exhibition, have the chance to go beyond parental vengeance and nationalism, since not all parents nor the children are aware (Avdić-LO, Interview). Therefore, with this exhibition, the CNA is trying to influence the new generations, in learning from past mistakes, as to avoid repeating what was done, implicitly insinuating that we can and have to do better.

## **5.2 Emotions/thoughts challenging the dominant narratives and building relationships**

An implicit assumption of the exhibition organizers reflects the idea that encounters with the photographs would be able to elicit certain emotions. In order to transform a conflict, it is necessary to aim at rebuilding and restoring the relationships and ties which can then result in the transformation of communities and the overall society, only if such transformation happens, sustainable peace is possible (Paffenholdz 2009: 5). In order to do so, it is of essence to focus on the emotions, and the ability of individuals to experience, express and share them, since they are of great value and a pivotal factor in fostering reconciliation (Lederach 1997: 26). It is therefore of no surprise that after the exhibitions, if present the local organizers and staff members did initiate conversations and welcomed all sorts of reflections.

Different evidence from the interviews imply that with the use of creative based projects, there can be positive implications for community relations, which is of essence for sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation. A way of bettering community relations lies in the finding that art can reduce prejudice and help in problem solving (Kollontai 2010: 264), also, it can serve as a mirror and warning for the future. Additionally, the findings of this research suggest that these images, can help individuals see, that across all three groups, there are wrongdoings, and that everyone suffered in different ways, which is immeasurable. It allows individuals to witness and see and hear what actually happened, and what was done in their name (Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview).

Despite being limited in number, creative projects in the region, are at times informative, but once they go deeper, they can contribute to lower levels of discrimination, but that this is merely a starting point, since we cannot expect that people will become conscious, because they saw some images, or watched a show, more needs to be done (Jocić-LO, Interview). Nonetheless other than concerts, several projects have been of crucial relevance for Sarajevo, BiH and even the region, Novalić (CNA-SM, Interview) believes, that they are important in numerous aspects, he singled out the inter-religious choir, which embarked on a reconciliation journey. Interestingly, the founder of the chorus, initiated the project, out of his own internal need of dealing with the loss and hatred he was experiencing. Individuals from different religious communities were brought together (1999-2001), which was a very big thing at the time, individuals from Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox communities, would perform religious anthems, and this was the first-time religions were entering into each other's spaces (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview). Standing in line to this, art can be a great way of fighting against prejudice and dealing with traumas of those who have been directly involved in the war and also indirectly (Kožul-CM, Interview). It has helped in bringing individuals together, fostering hope and positive feelings in BiH (Sarajevski 1996 as cited in Zelizer 2003: 65), and helped individuals retain a sense of self (Kollontai 2010: 264). It is a useful channel for solving problems and can lead to much needed confrontation with the problem (Kožul-CM, Interview).

Community relations wise, the exhibition has the potential to open hearts to others suffering, and portray the suffering of these 'others', for individuals throughout places in

BiH, this was the first opportunity to superficially meet the suffering of others, and the first step to open the heart, producing at least some sort of effect (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview). Therefore, such projects can bring people together and as a result that can open the possibility for further peacebuilding discussions. Art can contest our thoughts and helps us overcome existing divisions, it has the ability to appeal to many different viewers, since it can be personally experienced, by evoking the most genuine emotions (Kussion 2007: n.p). But findings suggest that at times it can also evoke unexpected emotions, which as a consequence can derail the process of peacebuilding. Jocić and Vujošević (LO and CM, Interview) emphasized that CNA activities and the images involved have the ability to change the consciousness of those involved, at least in those individual people who consent to it. Shank and Schirch (2008: 1), argue that art can transform the thought processes and have an impact on one's behavior, where the key role of peacebuilders is to incorporate creative and artistic endeavors into peacebuilding. After viewing these 51 images, for anyone who some emotion, their entire thought process can be challenged (Milicevic-CNA-SM, Interview).

“The images have a good message, and can influence our thoughts, which can create an avalanche, an avalanche in a positive sense, directed towards reconciliation” (Avdić-LO, Interview). Furthermore, arts can challenge, provoke, honor and even disclose information which was unfamiliar up until that point (Woods 2002:2). This is of great significance in BiH, since certain areas and cities have a certain ethnic majority, and therefore a more consolidated narrative, and with the mobile exhibition, other stories can also become highlighted and honored, which then can lead to shaking the us as victims and them as perpetrators narrative. Being exposed to the exhibition, can hopefully lead to questioning what has occurred, moving individuals and therefore instigating change. Therefore, artistic initiatives do have a possibility to challenge and inform the dominant narratives in terms of peace, as well as provide new ways of going about the conflict (Woods 2002: 2).

At least one of each representative of the three groups, community member, local organizer and CNA staff member, referred to practical examples of how the exhibition brought about change, and how that translates to the everyday functioning. Franović (CNA-SM, Interview), said, that she cannot be certain that if the exhibition did or did not do something, but in terms of activities with war veterans:

“no matter who the victims were, we went to lay flowers and leave our respect, these visits left a strong political message for the public in the region, but for the public who wants to see it”.

Both Franović (CNA-SM, Interview) and Novalić (CNA-SM, Interview) referred to the example of ‘Zavidovici’, where a crime was committed against imprisoned soldiers (minority in the area), and now after the visits a plate emerged, giving tribute to the individuals who lost their lives.

“I think these are great steps, and these people are not even aware how big of a thing they have done to improve the situation for the betterment of relationships there, and also the feeling of security for the minority living there” (Franović-CNA-SM, Interview)

Rather than separating the war veterans within the activities, possibly leading to greater hostility and hatred, the CNA tried to foster the relationships among war veterans and community members, by facilitating direct contact (Blagojević 2007: 556), since through contact there is a possibility to foster cooperation and empathy.

In conclusion, creative based projects/interventions at times can also help people form shared identities, by engaging in self-reflection and different thought processes as mentioned above. This can be helpful for uniting individuals in certain aspects of their experience and showing that they might have more in common than previously thought. Museums and exhibitions, as such not colored nationally and organized carefully, as this exhibition, have

the capacity to achieve such an occurrence. A positive example was referred to, the history museum focusing on the life during the Sarajevo siege, not coloured nationally. It showed how people got to work, how they cooked, what they ate, how it all looked, with all those UN bags on the windows (Turk-CNA-SM, Interview). Such positive examples are instrumental and helpful for creating mutual identities, since such endeavours are not coloured by nationalism, but by commonalities that everyone experienced.

### 5.3 How can creative projects reach wider masses?

On the contrary to the findings that art-based peacebuilding can be of use of bringing different identity groups together and therefore instigating certain useful processes (Zelizer 2003: 62), many of the interviewees have also said that the problem with these kinds of projects, is that they bring individuals with similar viewpoints, rather than bringing individuals from different backgrounds together. Vujošević (CM, Interview) argued that such events attract individuals who are already sensitized, and who do not have a problem with the content. Additionally, she does not know how such projects can reach those who have profoundly bled their hands and have been actively engaged in war.

Despite there being findings regarding the successful use of art in terms of peacebuilding, Gitau (2018: 35) argues that end-results are debatable and diverse, which is also the case with regard to this exhibition. As also revealed in the interviews, these projects are not efficient for reaching broader society, they are closed for a circle of like-minded people, therefore there is no such kind of exchange and openness towards the wider society (Jocić-LO, Interview). Additionally, she said that the exhibition surely contributed, but only up to a point, since it contributed only to those who gave their consent to see it and to hear. This depicts the reality- that such projects are mostly visited only by individuals who are similar minded (Kožul-CM, Interview), and therefore belonging to certain identity groups, supportive of building peace and reconciling rather than diverse groups of individuals. This is something that lacks reflection in the literature, and in the organization of such projects, which as a consequence undermines their potential.

However on the contrary, a local organizer from Tuzla, added that what makes WoM useful is it's mobility, and that it can reach wider masses (Avdić-LO, Interview), furthermore she added that since there are still many illiterate individuals, incapable of thoroughly reading or places in the country which have a lack of easy accessibility to certain events, the exhibition can reach them, and also it doesn't have a fee, you just come and observe the images, physically. For BiH, a country with many economically struggling cities and areas, this means individuals passing by would have a chance to see what is happening (Velma Saric as cited in Wahlin and Kahn 2015: 539), and by doing so, it would reach greater attendance. The benefits of showcasing this exhibition free of charge have been visible already, in a similar example, 'The Rescuers' exhibition, giving light to individuals opposing the injustice during the war, was showcased throughout BiH by a different set of organizers (Wahlin and Kahn 2015: 539).

On the contrary to the WoM exhibition, 'The Rescuers' exhibition, tried to ensure that there was an equal representation of the ethnic groups, something CNA restrained from. They organizers of 'The Rescuer's' exhibition believed the failure to do, could possibly to weaken the legitimacy of the overall project and led to violent retaliation (Wahlin and Kahn 2015: 539), this was not the case with 'WoM' exhibition. CNA restrained from doing so, because they wanted to eliminate the clear division of us vs them, and to portray that everyone suffered, and we should acknowledge everyone's suffering, collectively.

## 5.4 The use of creative arts can be destructive for peacebuilding

Once initially asked about the negative implications of creative based projects, most individuals firstly reacted as if there weren't any, but once asked about the ability of such projects to foster greater polarization, most of the respondents had things to add.

Interestingly what came out in the interviews, was the contestation in terms of the ownership of art, and who is creative. A rivalry between the government and civil society, indicating a sense of rejection and lack of approval of government managed creative projects was present in the interviews. This was probably influenced by the reality where the current governments in the region and in BiH, are the same ones who initiated the war, and are still promoting nationalistic and ethnic divisions. In spite of the notion that only if a variety of actors are involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation, for positive peace and reconciliation to happen, there still seems to be a rejection/approval on anything the government is involved with, which can be problematic. Building peace through reconciliation should ideally be implemented by numerous actors, throughout different levels of society (Blagojević 2007: 559), and from these findings it is clear that in BiH and in the region, different stakeholders are not aimed at reconciling the society, as Avdić(LO, Interview) also added as long as politicians are chosen across ethnic lines there will be no space for peace.

Also, there seems to be a differentiation between Arts and Politics, but can they be separate, arts in politics and politics in arts. Isn't art also a part of politics. Don't the images in the exhibition convey a very clear political message? Peace politics.

When it comes to the use, it has been argued that art and creative projects can be misused due to unawareness and mistakes, rather than bad intentions (Franović-CNA-SM) this was associated with not predicting certain events. Milicevic (CNA-SM, Interview) added that she does not recall any exhibition that was counterproductive, rather there are approaches which can be, due to the unawareness that you can create a bigger problem. She said that in spite of the positive aspects of such exhibitions which are dealing with the past, the negative aspect is that the society is getting polarized again, since there are always individuals who will relativize, attack artists and organizers, and disturb people. Also, each project can be misused for polarization of the society (Jocić-LO, Interview), even the WoM exhibition, could have been misinterpreted, CNA and local organizer were afraid that the people who participated in the wars would come and think that we are now attacking and blaming one side, nobody likes to be told that they are guilty (Jocić-LO, Interview).

## 5.5 Abuse of creative projects in peacebuilding efforts

Rather than being used for peacebuilding, creative projects, can be abused for the opposite, interestingly this was mostly related with the government. Rather than providing insights and new ways of interpretation of the events during the war, many governmental creative projects and museums are aimed at informing the ongoing political manipulation, by perpetuating divisions, nationalism and hostility. It was argued that projects under the influence of the government and cantons in BiH, very often lead to the reinforcement of the national ideology (Kožul-CM, Interview), this further contributes to the perpetuation of some existing myths, which are built and supported in public spaces. CNA staff members argued that in such governmental programs their aim is to prove that 'the others' are guilty, and that we are OK, and not as faulty this is done as a way of 'dealing with the past', but we are dealing with our victimhood, and their hostility. As for this, it is not with great difficulty to reach the conclusion, that the civil society world and its supporters believe, that the government agendas (not something I disagree with based on the history), are aimed at showing innocence



and pointing out the other's atrocities. "Art should not be in the service of nationalism and other myths, but it should be used to question such things, and actually to point out the problem, and raise the consciousness of the visitors...This is nothing more than a propaganda" (Kožul-CM, Interview)

Many of the museums in BiH are contributing to the breakdown of peace, as with the example of War Childhood Museum which was argued as problematic (Turk & Novalić, CNA-SM, Interview). Despite it being a good and noble idea, since it is the easiest to relate with children, leading to the first levels of humanization of the enemy, it portrays a one-sided narrative of fifty-two stories, without any stories from the second or third party (Turk & Novalić, CNA-SM, Interview). The politics and representations behind the particular museum and also similar type exhibitions are intentional, which is the case throughout different contexts. In Israel and Palestine, similarly to BiH, the influence of institutions in representing the struggles of their people and their truth, as to gain the sympathy of the global public, while also reinforcing the national memory is evident in museum sites (Mendel and Alexa Rose Steinberg 2011: 19). The creators of war and conflict, they are very intelligent, and use various methods, as certain exhibitions - manipulative in character, for the purpose of assisting, and proving some of their theses, which common sense suggests that is rather debatable (Jocić-LO, Interview).

Rather than reconstructing the ethnic hostility and animosity followed by prejudice, creative projects in peacebuilding need careful consideration (Blagojević 2007: 557). Despite the existent knowledge that creative projects can cause the resurgence of unexperienced emotions and traumas, the government and its supporters are still manipulating creative expression within museums and exhibitions insensitively. Rather than eliciting awareness and reflection, it can lead to the affirm of nationalistic and ethno-centric beliefs, which probably is the purpose of such endeavors. Art is an asset in the reconciliation process, since important messages can be sent through art, those working on dismantling peace and reconciliation from the far right, have also understood this, and now it depends on how creative they will get (Novalić-CNA-SM, Interview).

## Chapter 6

### Final reflections

The aim of this paper was to provide insights, for the use of creative arts in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation, more specifically to what extent, the photographic exhibition 'WoM' can promote peacebuilding in BiH.

Reflecting upon the overall findings, it is evident that the conflict in BiH has not achieved its full transformation. The exhibition contributed to peacebuilding in BiH, but with limitations, possibly because of the inability to attract wider audience and those opposed to peace. This finding is of potentially great importance, since a transformation of conflict is of great vitality for any post-conflict society. Moreover, the contribution which was mainly referred was at an individual level, but whether attaining individual change can translate to a more reconciled and peaceful society, remains unknown.

In terms of theory contribution for conflict transformation, it was found, that creative endeavors can both help and hinder wider peacebuilding efforts. On a positive note, the findings reflect that art-based peacebuilding can be beneficial, at least as a starting point for further peacebuilding efforts. Despite the possibility of various things going wrong in such a complex and contested political environment, the exhibition was able to evoke the sincerest emotions and constructive thoughts. This perhaps could have contributed to combating ethnic hostility, division and animosity ethno-nationalism, by promoting empathy, respect and therefore aiding relationship-building, but only up to a point.

Furthermore, mapping the monuments, conducting research, organizing visits with war veterans and facilitating the exhibitions has led to practical contributions as well. As such certain places of suffering which were unmarked, after the CNA activities became marked and, in that way, acknowledged the other's pain and translated into higher safety for the ethnic minority, positively contributing to wider peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Within the 'WoM' exhibition, it was of great importance to shed light on the problematic monumental culture which emerged after the war in both Serbia and BiH. Also, to tell the story that these monuments rather than commemorating the victims, were put in place to support and maintain a collective ethno-nationalistic memory. Rather what they reflect now, monuments can possibly become a place of dialogue aimed at a better future.

Instead of having only positive implications, creative endeavors can also have negative consequences for peacebuilding, as such through history and time in BiH and wider, such projects have been used to manipulate audiences, impose narratives and promote ethno-nationalism. If not used strategically and carefully, these projects can also lead to more emotional turmoil and the re-traumatization of societies, particularly in BiH, where many of the wounds have not seemed to heal. Even though, the exhibition, generated a discussion using a new creative channel, rather than restraining to the usual politics talk, it did not achieve all it has set out to do. One of the possible reasons why creative arts have such limits in the context of BiH and wider, is because they are cannot be dissociated from the governing politics, the monumental culture and warring memories, and from competing messages sent to the public arena, from political, media and educational outlets, which innately are not oriented towards transforming a conflict and building sustainable peace. One cannot ignore the persistent influence this all has on peacebuilding, irrespective of the brilliance of the War of Memory exhibition and the potential of creative arts.

Lastly, certain recommendations which could be of use for civil society organizations and projects of this kind would rely on the notion, that identities, relationships and peace need time to be built. These projects should restrain from being a one-time occurrence, on

the contrary they need to be a rounded story, which will continue over time. As of this, artistic projects need to think-through their realistic aims, what is standing in their way, and also think of possible ways of expanding the potential reach of their creative projects. By doing so the potential of creative arts can be utilized sufficiently, further translating into greater contribution for peacebuilding. Only if there is cooperation across various levels within the society, government, civil society, and community members, can sustainable peace and reconciliation be attainable, something not often reflected by different stakeholders.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the interviewees

#### CNA Staff members

**Name: Ivana Franović**

Date: 06.07.2018

Location: CNA Belgrade Offices

From: Belgrade, Serbia

Position: Staff member, actively involved in the overall research and publication on the culture of remembrance and monuments in BiH, also involved in fostering the exhibition as well.

**Name: Katarina Milicević**

Date: 06.07.2018

Location: CNA Belgrade Offices

From: Kragujevac, Serbia

Position: Staff member, also actively involved in numerous activities within the organization and the exhibition of interest.

**Name: Davorka Turk**

Date: 17.7.2018

Location: CNA Sarajevo Offices

From: Zagreb, Croatia

Position: Staff member, actively involved in different projects and activities CNA is facilitating, hosting and organizing.

**Name: Nedžad Novalić**

Date: 17.7.2018

Location: CNA Sarajevo Offices

From: Zenica, BiH

Position: Staff member, same as other members contributing extensively to the work CNA is doing and is involved in facilitating and organizing numerous projects.

## **Local Organizers**

### **Name: Nedzada Avdić**

Date: 18.7.2018

Location: Tuzla, quite café

From: Tuzla, BiH

Position: lawyer by profession, and current political representative in the parliament in Tuzla, one of the ten Cantons of the Federation.

### **Name: Gordana Jocić**

Date: 24.07.2018

Location: Kragujevac, Hotel Lobby Cafe

From: Kragujevac, Serbia

Position: a reporter/active in peace work, Chief editor of 'Radio Zlatousti', author of numerous radio shows, and founder of the Centre for Peace Initiatives

## **Community members**

### **Name: Dejan Kožul**

Date: 19.7.2018

Location: Belgrade, café

From: Identified himself as belonging to Serbia, BiH and Croatia

Position: Journalist interested in covering topics pertaining to peacebuilding and creative-arts, has his own podcast: <https://www.mixcloud.com/dejankozul/>

### **Name: Lela Vujošević**

Date: 24.07.2018

Location: Kragujevac, Hotel Lobby Cafe

From: Kragujevac, Tuzla

Position: Sociologist, author and publisher affiliated with the University of Kragujevac, has numerous publications on Feminism and role of women within wars and history.