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BEYOND REMEMBRANCE: COMMEMORATING THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE  
THROUGH COFFEE RITUALS

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Esame finale anno 2025

To my dearest Mom, who knows how to love deeply

## ABSTRACT

### **Beyond Remembrance: Commemorating the Srebrenica Genocide through Coffee Rituals**

The coffee custom serves as a powerful carrier of cultural memory, both *stored* (*past-oriented*) and *functional* (*future-oriented*) (Assmann and Assmann 1994). In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), coffee drinking is a deeply rooted social ritual representing hospitality, quality time and togetherness. However, this ritual may assume a functional dimension when adapted to the complex post-traumatic socio-political context. To illustrate, the nomadic monument ŠTO TE NEMA (*Why aren't you here?*), the documentary drama *My Thousand Year Old Land* (*A Song for BiH*), and the commemorative performance 8372 (including its subsequent versions) re-semanticise the coffee ritual to convey the sense of human loss and address the Srebrenica genocide (1995), which resulted in the killing of more than 8,000 mainly Bosniak male population. Bosnian coffee traditions rely on interactive activity, and artists purposefully embrace this feature to create a space of engagement for wider audiences. In these art initiatives, the coffee ritual appears as a mnemonic strategy for reimagining the very idea of remembrance and contributing to the shift in monumentalisation: contemporary artists discover inclusive and community-driven forms to remember past events and create broad access to them, which traditional monuments have failed to achieve (Murphy 2021b). In the Bosnian case, artists create new narratives that function beyond the hegemonic, rigid and homogenising narratives, breaking away from the sphere of influence of the political elites.

This research responds to the call of third-wave memory studies scholars to study agency and memory-making as a contested process, integrating more inclusive and future-oriented elements that can bring about positive social changes in transnational memory politics rather than solely concentrating on the traumatic past. Moreover, it aims to build upon Rigney's (2018) *memory-activism* nexus by adding the art element and exploring the role of art as a catalyst for change and remembrance. Despite a long-standing focus on art, European memory studies has yet to establish clear definitions that include memory, art and activism components. Nor has it offered practical tools for exploring alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives. By drawing inspiration from *memory art* (Huyssen 2022), *memory activism* (Gutman et al. 2023) and *art activism* (Serafini 2018; Sholette 2022)

concepts and critically engaging with them, I aim to contribute to this gap in the literature. I propose an analytical tool, visualised in graph and table, that can be applied to analyse the relationship between memory, art, and activism, based on the artwork's level of engagement with socio-political issues and emphasis on memory. As artworks may erase the "boundaries between memorial commemoration and aesthetic experience" (Demaria et al. 2022, 2), I argue that specific forms of art contribute to fostering empathy in divided societies (and beyond) by addressing the loss of human lives generating access to spaces and memories that are otherwise restricted or denied. Furthermore, in the artistic depictions of coffee, the juxtaposition of the ordinary to tragic and the creating/breaking of human bonds contribute to the effectiveness of these art initiatives in reaching broad audiences.

The dissertation suggests a mixed methodological framework for analysing commemorative art practices: 1) Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress 2010, 2012) to analyse various dimensions of artworks. 2) Qualitative semi-structured, in-depth interviews with artists and participants, conducted both live and online, to gain deeper insights about the artworks. 3) A combination of Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding Model with Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the meanings generated by artists and their interpretation by audiences. The author intends that the methodological framework she has created will prove helpful in the examination of alternative commemorative art and/or memory activist practices that emerge in contexts where violence, conflict, and international crimes, including genocide, have been experienced or are currently taking place.

This research focuses on non-conventional forms of remembrance that challenge the traditional forms of remembrance by proposing more inclusive ways to commemorate war atrocities, such as crimes of genocide. My focus is on the uses of coffee as a universal symbol of human connectivity and solidarity in responding to current social contexts, such as genocide denials and ongoing violence, and the potentials of art memory activism to advocate for social change.

## **KEYWORDS**

Transnational mourning, alternative forms of remembrance, humanisation, inclusion in commemoration, memory activism, memory artivism, art and audience engagement.

## PREFACE

Studying atrocities, such as the Srebrenica genocide, is an emotionally involving process. As historian Wulf Kansteiner notes, whenever we confront atrocities, it is hard not to be deeply affected (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022a). Kansteiner's extensive research in Holocaust historiography and memory suggests that narration becomes a powerful vehicle for historians to engage with these emotions meaningfully. Thus, while history discipline requires critical thinking, objectivity, and self-distancing, it also requires passion. PhD students are advised to be passionate about their topic to sustain the often-demanding research process concerning complex and challenging historical events. Passion also concerns the prevention of atrocities happening again and trying to understand what happened, including the dark twists of history. This drive extends beyond mere rationality and logic; it taps into the empathetic and ethical dimensions that animate the study of the past. Ultimately, studying history in this way is not only an intellectual exercise but also a moral commitment to understanding the complexities of the past with empathy and insight.

Historians have traditionally taken a conservative approach to their craft, often favouring textual and analytical methods emphasising rationality, structure, and distance. Yet, as Robert A. Rosenstone suggests, history needs not be confined within these boundaries. Therefore, he invites historians to experiment with language, perspective, sound, and colour to explore the past in ways that resonate deeply and diversely (Švedas 2020, 132). In exploring alternative artistic commemorative practices that are inherently multimodal and self-representational, I aim to accept Rosenstone's challenge. Besides that, I am interested in the power dynamics these initiatives convey, especially in shaping public opinion and fostering a sense of belonging. Usually, historians do not delve into the questions of power and hegemony nor pay enough attention to the economic aspects of the creation, distribution, and consumption of the culture of history and the commercialisation of historical memory. In this case, I am also interested in how the selected initiatives are funded and where they come from, as that shapes the narratives within them. Therefore, the interests of this research also extend beyond the traditional boundaries of history, leaning towards memory studies and intersecting with considerations of power, economics, and art.

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For that, I have to thank the *Global Histories, Cultures, and Politics* Admissions Board, who believed in my project and selected it from about 300 applications, and **Paolo Capuzzo**, who accepted me to work under his professional supervision in 2021. Also, I was extremely fortunate to have a second wonderful supervisor, **Cristina Demaria** from the Department of the Arts, alongside me. These two mentors' joint supervision helped me maintain discipline and punctuality, set realistic goals, stay focused and organised, and enhance my critical thinking. I am also grateful to my discussant, **Francesco Mazzucchelli**, for carefully reading my extended proposal and valuable comments back in 2022. Finally, I am grateful for the camaraderie of my fellow doctoral candidates, including **Claudia Lanzidei**, **Benjamin Leathley**, and **Francesco**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AGRFT:** Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana
- ARBiH:** *Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine* [Army of the Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina]
- ARK:** *Autonomna regija Krajine* [Autonomous Region of Krajina]
- BA:** Bachelor of Arts
- BAFTA:** British Academy Film Awards
- BCS:** Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language(s)
- BiH:** *Bosna i Hercegovina* [Bosnia and Herzegovina]
- BIRN:** Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
- BSA:** Bosnian Serb Assembly
- CADA:** Colectivo Acciones de Arte
- CDA:** Critical Discourse Analysis
- COVID-19:** Coronavirus disease 2019, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, leading to a global pandemic
- DPA:** Dayton Peace Agreement
- Dutchbat:** Dutch Battalion
- EU:** European Union
- HDZ:** *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* [Croatian Democratic Union]
- HR:** High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- HVO:** *Hrvatsko vijeće obrane* [Croatian Defence Council]
- ICC:** International Criminal Court
- ICJ:** International Court of Justice
- ICTY:** International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
- IRMCT** or *Mechanism:* International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
- JNA:** *Jugoslovenska narodna armija* [Yugoslav People's Army]
- MA:** Master of Arts
- MBE:** Most Excellent Order of the British Empire
- MMDA/MDA:** Multimodal Discourse Analysis
- MTYOC:** *My Thousand Year Old Challenge*
- MTYOL:** *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)*
- NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization

**OHR:** Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**PCRC:** Post-Conflict Research Centre

**PhD:** Doctor of Philosophy

**RECOM:** The Regional Commission for Truth and Reconciliation

**RS:** *Republika Srpska*

**SAO Krajina:** Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina [Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina]

**SDA:** *Stranka demokratske akcije* [Party of Democratic Action]

**SDS:** *Srpska demokratska stranka* [Serbian Democratic Party]

**SI:** Situationist International

**UK:** United Kingdom

**UN:** United Nations

**UNGA:** United Nations General Assembly

**UNPROFOR:** United Nations Protection Force

**UNREST:** *Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe* research project

**US/A:** United States of America

**VRS:** *Vojska Republike Srpske* [Army of the Republika Srpska]

# INTRODUCTION

## Relevance of Dissertation Topic and the Context

Since the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001), the concept of *sites of memory* (Nora 1989) has been increasingly contested in the post-Yugoslav space. Already during the wars, many monuments commemorating what became perceived as the ‘unwanted socialist heritage’ of the Yugoslav era were destroyed (Bădescu, Baillie, and Mazzucchelli 2021), including the monuments that promoted gender-based narratives (Kajinić 2021). Many have been replaced by new memorials to honour the recent war-related suffering of the dominant ethnic group (Pejović and Nikolovski 2022). In the aftermath of ethnic cleansing, human displacement, and the creation of nation-states, many survivors feel excluded from society and its memory culture; their access to certain memory sites is either limited or prevented altogether (Fridman 2022; Sivac-Bryant 2015). The 1995 Srebrenica Massacre, recognised as a genocide by international courts (i.e., the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and International Court of Justice (ICJ), remains one of the most significant bones of contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina (further BiH or Bosnia) in the region.

Despite the annual Srebrenica genocide commemorations on site and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution to mark 11 July as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide, Republika Srpska (further RS)<sup>1</sup> officials are pursuing deliberate genocide denial. In recent years, this denial significantly increased (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2022), reaching the stage of triumphalism (Halilovich 2018) and encouraging public celebration in RS (Simic 2024). Although the High Representative (HR)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Self-proclaimed military state before the Dayton Agreement (1995), now one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, dominated by Bosnian Serbs.

<sup>2</sup> The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina (HR) is an international official responsible for overseeing the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), which ended the

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imposed the 2021 Genocide Denial Law and numerous cases have been filed, no one has been punished due to the difficulty of proving direct incitement and demonstrable consequences (Simic 2024). Simultaneously, RS authorities patronise the former Bosnian Serb political and military officials from the war to continue holding positions in the public and political sectors (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021b). These actions also reflect the RS's politics of selective memory, which commemorates only Bosnian Serb victims while systematically ignoring the suffering of Bosniaks, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Roma and others.

Genocide denial prevails beyond the RS. Srebrenica Memorial Centre (2023) observes denialism cases in BiH and throughout the region, infiltrating media, education, science, culture, and politics. This genocide negationism is also widespread internationally. During the UN General Assembly (UNGA) vote to establish an international day to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide on 23 May 2024, Antigua and Barbuda, the Republic of Belarus, People's Republic of China, the Union of Comoros, the Republic of Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Commonwealth of Dominica, State of Eritrea, Kingdom of Eswatini, Grenada, Hungary, Republic of Mali, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, Republic of Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic voted against signalling their refusal to formally recognise the genocide, while many other abstaining countries did not support such recognition either.

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Bosnian War in 1995. The HR has broad powers, including the authority to impose laws and remove officials in order to maintain peace and stability in the country.

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Although the victims and survivors of the Srebrenica genocide gained and secured their access<sup>3</sup> to the sight of suffering,<sup>4</sup> their mourning and grief may not be considered *deserved* (Butler 2003) and highly welcomed by RS authorities. Annual commemorations happen to be disrupted by loud and provocative music from the parallel celebration of Bosnian Serbs, known as the ‘liberation of Srebrenica’ (Gadzo 2021) and the new generation of non-Bosniaks (referring to one of the three constituent peoples of BiH) does not learn about the genocide in school. Contrariwise, murals, graffiti, and online campaigns on social media glorify and celebrate Bosnian Serb General and genocide convicts Ratko Mladić and the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) as heroes, which promote hatred, denies the suffering of victims and survivors and trivialises the atrocities committed against them.

As opposed to the lack of official commemoration of inclusive wartime suffering and the practice of repressive and defensive forms of forgetting (Assmann 2021) fostered by RS, new commemorative art practices have emerged to honour the victims of Srebrenica. The format of these art initiatives varies from film (*Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020), *The Fog of Srebrenica* (2015), virtual exhibition (*Faces of Srebrenica, Remnants of Genocide*), art installation (*Mother’s Scarf*) to participatory performance (*8372, Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*), documentary drama play (*My Thousand Old Land (A Song for BiH)*) and nomadic monument

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<sup>3</sup> Not all victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity in BiH have such access. For instance, Omarska torture camp survivors are denied access to the former concentration camp not only for political reasons but also because the campsite is now private property owned by an international London-based consortium. Varun Sasindran’s film *Omarska* (2018) creatively draws upon a range of film techniques to reconstruct and provide virtual access to the place of suffering. Additionally, Sebina Sivic-Bryant’s (2015) article demonstrates how transitional justice interventions may produce hidden arms in the case of the Omarska Memorial Project. Moreover, governments and individuals repurposed many former detention centres and sites of suffering, including hotels turned into rape camps (Graham-Harrison 2018), or community halls used for the execution of prisoners, foreclosing any opportunity for the memorialisation of traumatic events.

<sup>4</sup> Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre is the central institution for preserving the memory of the genocide. It deals with documentation and preservation, conducts oral history recordings and research, organises exhibitions, projects, and various events, and cooperates with civil society and similar activities. Most importantly, the Memorial Centre offers a permanent space for remembrance at the very site where the atrocities began, housing the Memorial–Cemetery complex, which allows the victims to be laid to rest together.



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(ŠTO TE NEMA). This dissertation examines the emerging phenomenon of non-traditional forms of commemoration expressed through art, which engage audiences more effectively and empower those who feel excluded. Also, it explores how these art practices contribute to more inclusive approaches and spreading awareness in the region and beyond.

### **Research Object: What are These Alternative Commemorative Art Practices?**

This research explores nomadic, dynamic, unstable bottom-up initiatives that generate new *memory spaces* (Demaria et al. 2022) to remember the victims of Srebrenica, transcending borders. The spectrum of art initiatives that challenge the hegemonic, rigid and homogenising narratives while expanding access to the memory of the Srebrenica genocide is broad and still growing. Thus, this study has purposely selected three art initiatives that share a **common denominator of coffee** to reference rich Bosnian coffee culture. There are specific reasons behind the selection of initiatives that use coffee as a mnemonic device. Other devices or symbols (discussed in Chapter 4) do not offer the same level of empowerment and participatory experience as the coffee. Moreover, many mnemonic devices often seem banal, politicised, and lack the multiple layers of meaning that coffee provides. The choice of coffee is especially compelling because, at first glance, it seems unrelated to mourning. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (2012, 6) observed that coffee is not just a drink but an integral part of social ritual. In some cultures, e.g., in England, this ritual might be expressed through tea, yet its essence remains the same. Due to the universality of coffee, these coffee-based initiatives have the potential to reach a wider audience and have a broad impact.

**Re-semanticising coffee** as a social symbol of togetherness and everyday life in art to discuss Srebrenica is both intriguing and practical: it brings participants closer to understanding the pain of losing loved ones and the emptiness of lacking someone to share a cup of drink. The

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participants might not understand what it means to lose extended family in the genocide, but they can relate to their personal loss: what it means not to have a dear person to share a cup of coffee with anymore. In this way, the coffee custom becomes a powerful carrier of cultural memory, both *stored* (*past-oriented*) and *functional* (*future-oriented*) (Assmann and Assmann 1994). In BiH, coffee drinking is a deeply rooted (*stored*) social ritual that represents hospitality, quality time, and togetherness. Yet, in the complex post-traumatic socio-political context, this ritual can take on a new, *functional* dimension. The Bosnian coffee traditions rely on interactive activity, and artists purposefully embrace this feature to create a space of engagement for broad audiences. Simultaneously, coffee infuses a unique *texture* into memory (Young 1993), adding dynamism and inclusiveness. Furthermore, in the artistic depictions of coffee, the juxtaposition of the ordinary to the tragic and the creating/breaking of human bonds contribute to the effectiveness of these art initiatives in reaching broad audiences.

In these art initiatives, coffee appears as a mnemonic strategy for **reimagining the very idea of remembrance** and contributing to the **shift in monumentalisation**: contemporary artists discover inclusive and community-driven forms to remember past events and create broad access to them, which traditional monuments have failed to achieve (Murphy 2021b). In the Bosnian case, artists create new narratives that function beyond established nationalist, rigid and homogeneous narratives, breaking away from the sphere of influence of the political elites. Therefore, this research explores 1) the nomadic monument<sup>5</sup> project ŠTO TE NEMA (*Why are you not here?/Where have you been?*), which recently became a non-profit organisation founded by Bosnian-American activist Aida Šehović, 2) one-time commemorative performance 8372, its additional variations and epilogue *Stories of Coffee*

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<sup>5</sup> A kind of monument that disrupts the perceived stability and dominance of traditional monuments, offering inclusive participation for a diverse group of individuals (discussed broader in Chapter 3, see section 3.3).

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*Grounds/8372* by Slovene dramaturge, critic and performer Benjamin Zajc and 3) documentary drama play<sup>6</sup> *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* (abr. MTYOL) by British Director Susan Moffat and Bosnian-born Communities & Partnership Engagement Manager at *New Vic Borderlines* Aida Salkić Haughton MBE. All of them re-semanticise the coffee ritual to convey the feeling of absence and address the Srebrenica genocide (1995), which resulted in the killings of more than 8,000 mainly Bosniak male population. I will briefly introduce each initiative below. They are analysed in more detail in Chapter 6.

### 1) ŠTO TE NEMA Project

Today, a notable project, ŠTO TE NEMA, founded by Bosnian-American visual artist Aida Šehović has evolved and changed over the years. Its name derives from the well-known Bosnian love song (bcs. *sevdalinka*) *Što te nema* (translated as *Why are you not here? or Where have you been?*) as it was inspired by the widow from Srebrenica, who misses her husband the most over coffee (Hafner 2020). ŠTO TE NEMA started as a one-day performance at Baščaršija (Old Market Square in Sarajevo, BiH) on 11 July 2006 to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. At that time, the artist appeared alone and filled 923 cups donated by the *Women of Srebrenica* association with freshly brewed grounded coffee. Although Šehović did not originally intend to continue, the support of genocide survivors and victims' families inspired the transformation of the performance into a nomadic participatory monument, in which the artist would not perform alone but invite communities to build it together. Therefore, over time, Šehović remained increasingly in the background as she opened more space for volunteers and passersby to fill the traditional porcelain coffee cups (bcs. *filđžani*) in memory of the victims.

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<sup>6</sup> A play based on research, facts, and verbatim testimonies.

**Between 2006 and 2020, the ŠTO TE NEMA nomadic monument had traveled to 15 cities:**

**2020** >> Srebrenica Memorial Center in Potočari, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**2019** >> Serra dei Giardini in Venice, Italy

**2018** >> Helvetiaplatz in Zurich, Switzerland

**2017** >> Daley Plaza in Chicago, USA

**2016** >> Copley Square in Boston, USA

**2015** >> Place de Saint-Gervais in Geneva, Switzerland

**2014** >> Yonge-Dundas Square in Toronto, Canada

**2013** >> Washington Square Park in New York, USA

**2012** >> Taksim Square in Istanbul, Turkey

**2011** >> Church Street in Burlington, USA

**2010** >> Norrmalmstorg in Stockholm, Sweden

**2009** >> Het Plein in The Hague, Netherlands

**2008** >> Trg žrtava genocida in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**2007** >> The United Nations Headquarters, USA

**2006** >> Baščaršija in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Years and town squares where ŠTO TE NEMA was constructed on 11 July.  
Screenshot from the official website of ŠTO TE NEMA (2024b)**

For the first 15 years (2006-2020), ŠTO TE NEMA existed as a living monument, erected in various cities around the world, where Bosnian diaspora communities wished to build the monument as a way of paying the respect to the victims, strengthening their community and informing their fellow citizens in the countries where they had settled about the tragedy and pain they had suffered in their homeland. The number of donated cups increased each time the monument was set, eventually surpassing the target of 8,372 *fildžani*.<sup>7</sup> 2020 marked a

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<sup>7</sup> ŠTO TE NEMA follows the number of victims (i.e., 8,372) given by the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre, which is also engraved on the plaque in the memorial cemetery. However, the exact number is unknown due to the ongoing process of exhumation and identification of bodies. The ICTY and ICJ have stated that some “more than 8000” victims were killed during the genocide.

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turning point in the history of ŠTO TE NEMA, when it was built at the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre, which serves as the principal repository of the memory of Srebrenica, and became the final iteration of ŠTO TE NEMA as a travelling monument.

Now, the long-term artistic project remains active in other forms. In 2021, it became a non-profit organisation in the United States to safeguard the legacy and integrity of the project. Soon, in 2022, a parallel non-profit organisation was registered in BiH. Currently, Šehović is working on the challenging task of creating a permanent version of ŠTO TE NEMA.

Meanwhile, horizontal shelves with cups were exhibited in St. Louis (USA) and Sarajevo in 2021 and 2022. Also, Šehović holds workshops with different communities and informs them about the Srebrenica genocide to prevent similar atrocities, contributing to more inclusive education and community building in BiH and beyond. Recently, the film *Where Have You Been* (2024) was released to tell the story of the nomadic monument and communities involved. In this way, ŠTO TE NEMA continues to move on and to fulfil its mission of the prevention of genocide in a variety of ways.

### **2) 8372 Performance, Its Variations, and Epilogue**

8372 started as a one-time commemorative performance inspired by ŠTO TE NEMA, which gained popularity and recognition transnationally. At that time, Benjamin Zajc, a dramaturgy student, with the help of his participants, planned to grind 8,372 grams of coffee and send it to Šehović to make coffee for every 8,372 *fildžan*: each victim killed during the Srebrenica genocide. Unfortunately, Zajc's performance got postponed due to the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, and ŠTO TE NEMA was no longer present as a living monument.



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**ŠTO TE NEMA in Istanbul (2012) Amel Bešlagić © Aida Šehović**



**ŠTO TE NEMA in New York City (2013) Paul Ramirez Jonas © Aida Šehović**

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8372 happened at the Ljubljana's Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television basement. The performance was split into three days (30 March-1 April 2022), lasting 24 hours, from 10 am to 6 pm (8 hours daily). During 8372, 5 participants were encouraged to sit at the table and grind more than 8 kilograms of coffee with Zajc using the granite mortar and pestle. The performance was primarily motivated by Zajc's family history, representing the perpetrators' side. 8372 enabled Zajc to take responsibility for his relative's actions of hate and inform the participants of what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995. Grinding coffee proved to be more physically demanding than one might have imagined, but simultaneously, it stimulated all the senses, creating a unique collective experience.

Although Zajc treats 8372 as a unique single performance, he presented several short versions of it: 8372/II at the Maribor Theatre Festival on 4 June 2022 and 8372/III at the Ljubljana's Academy on 4 October 2022. As Zajc accumulated around 10 kilograms of grained coffee, he came up with the epilogue titled *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372 [Zgodbe kavne usedline/8372]* that took place on the 7 February 2023 on the Academy's Performative Day. This epilogue was about sipping the ground coffee (from previous performances) together, chatting, and appreciating the privilege of peace. In one day, Zajc held seven performances of 20-40 minutes with 5-8 participants in a basement similar to the one previously held 8372.

Due to an invitation from the Osijek Academy of Arts and Culture, Zajc performed 8372/IV on 21 March 2023 during the 13th International Puppetry Festival *Lutkokaz* in Osijek, Croatia. As the mortars were heavy, Zajc brought only four: one for himself and three for the audience. This time, the performance was staged very differently. Zajc performed 8372/IV for the festival audience (about 100 people), with three people who could change their seats with the audience. Although 8372 was initially a one-off performance, its replicas spontaneously travelled around Slovenia and Croatia.



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**8372 in the basement of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 30 March 2022 © Jaka Gasar from *Dnevnik.si* (Butala 2022)**



**8372 in the basement of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 30 March 2022 © Željko Stevanić (SIGLEDAL 2022)**



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### 3) Documentary Drama *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)*

In order to raise genocide awareness, the theatre director Susan (Sue) Moffat and Bosnian War survivor Aida Salkić Haughton MBE put on a documentary play together, which premiered at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme, England, on 11 July 2022, the Srebrenica Memorial Day. Until February 2025, different versions of this play have been performed 13 times at the New Vic Theatre and on tour in the UK. Additionally, it was often live-streamed online worldwide to BiH and local schools in the UK. Apart from focusing on the genocide in Srebrenica, *My Thousand Year Old Land* (MTYOL) sheds light on other neglected massacres across BiH committed mainly against Bosniaks and disloyal persons to VRS during the Bosnian War.

To meet the criteria of a documentary drama, Moffat researched, gathered facts and collected verbatim testimony from survivors of the Bosnian war, including Haughton and war crimes investigators, and masterfully blended those individual stories to represent the recent history of the Bosnian people. MTYOL employs various theatrical techniques, such as object and shadow theatre as well as traditional folk songs, to immortalise these stories. In fact, the title of *My Thousand Year Old Land* refers to the lyrics of *Jedna si, jedina/You Are the One and Only*, written by Dino Merlin, while the melody draws inspiration from traditional folk music.

Despite the painful and dark subject matter, the play also includes many cultural elements that aim to familiarise the audience with deeply rooted Bosnian traditions. One of these traditions is drinking coffee and coffee-ground fortune telling. MTYOL uses coffee rituals to evoke the idyll of everyday life, shattered by war and its atrocities beyond our control. Coffee also unpacks Bosnian identity, the spirit of the neighbourhood, enjoyment, therapy, and quality time that Bosnians experience while having coffee together. At the same time, coffee appears as a medium to reach audience members who cherish similar rituals.

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Coffee scene from *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* © Andrew Billington  
Photography taken from *The Guardian* (Butterwick 2022)



Coffee scene from *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* © Andrew Billington  
Photography taken from the New Vic Theatre official website (2022)

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On June 19, 2023, in cooperation with Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Genocide Investigation Caroline Sturdy Colls, Haughton and Moffat launched a parallel project, *My Thousand Year Old Challenge* (MTYOC), which aims to introduce learning about the Srebrenica Genocide into the national UK school curriculum. They also engage with policymakers to raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide and emphasise the importance of educating about it to prevent the occurrence of hate and xenophobia in the UK context.

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Embracing the coffee ritual is not the only thing that unites these art initiatives. All selected works appear participatory, promote empathy, avoid victimisation discourse, employ an inclusive approach, contribute to peacebuilding, and emerge in different places to raise genocide awareness. Moreover, these art initiatives create an alternative space for remembrance, which is highly limited in RS as well as in Serbia if we look at the post-Yugoslav space as the *region of memory* (Fridman 2022). Also, they aim to inform the new generation—the *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019)—about the Srebrenica genocide and provide access to its history and facts, which are being distorted or swept under the carpet by the RS and Serbia's political elites and education systems. Besides the local and regional populations, these initiatives often address global audiences to inform the international community about the Srebrenica genocide and seek equal recognition for the victims, aiming to prevent any potential war crimes, ethnic (or other kinds of) hatred and racism, and fostering a 'never again' narrative. As they emerge beyond the borders of BiH and appear highly participatory, I argue that they generate the effect of transnational mourning.

### **Theoretical Framework: Navigating Narratives through Memory Studies**

This study primarily relies on theoretical frameworks of memory studies; however, it departs from historiographical debates on narrative framing. Chapter 1 creates a cohesive thread that

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bridges constructivism, narrativist and post-narrativist approaches, multiperspectivity, and pluralism to arrive at the interdisciplinary concept of agonistic memory, inspired by political theorist Chantal Mouffe's (2005, 2013) work on agonism in politics and used by historians focused on memory studies (Berger and Kansteiner 2021a). Based on such an approach, political historian Anna Cento Bull and memory scholar Hans Lauge Hansen (2016) developed a concept of agonistic memory. Drawing from Astrid Erll's (2011a) concept of 'narrative modes,' they define three modes of remembering: antagonist, cosmopolitan and agonist. **Agonistic memory** acknowledges the reality of conflicting narratives and seeks to transform antagonism (the tensions between 'us' and 'them') into a non-violent space for interaction. In this space, different, even opposing, narratives can engage and compete without resorting to destruction. Bull and Hansen (2016) criticise the widely spread Euro-centric cosmopolitan mode, which often oversimplifies past conflicts and erases individual group experiences. Instead, agonistic memory embraces conflicting and co-existing narratives, allowing each to propose its perspective and contribute to narrative plurality. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that not all narratives hold equal validity, and an uncritical approach may lead to relativism. To address this relativism challenge, historian Hayden White (1986) proposed **critical pluralism**, which acknowledges historical multiplicity while maintaining a rigorous analytical framework. However, White did not elaborate on this concept further.

Meanwhile, Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021) suggest 'radical multiperspectivism' as a strategy that offers understanding by including the 'other' side(s) without justifying perpetrators' actions and preventing the legitimisation of past wrongdoings. Yet, incorporating the perpetrators' perspective can be risky in highly antagonistic and unsettled contexts, such as BiH. In such a case, Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021, 27–28) suggest combining cosmopolitan and agonistic approaches by 1) revealing the social

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construction of cultural memory, 2) acknowledging the ‘other’ as a human being, and 3) upholding respect for fundamental human rights. Kansteiner and Berger (2021) observe that **integrating agonistic remembrance with cosmopolitan values** can be beneficial, mainly because agonistic memory may be difficult to grasp, lacks ethical clarity, and might be ineffective as a stand-alone framework. Therefore, **this dissertation adopts the agonistic memory, infused with cosmopolitan values, as the leading approach to examine the complex historical event of the Srebrenica genocide.**

The concept of agonistic memory is more aligned with the field of memory studies than with history. Indeed, Chapter 1 concludes that historical theory does not provide comprehensive tools to explore alternative commemorative art practices and the narratives they produce. As historical theory rarely engages with ‘multiperspectivity’ and ‘pluralism,’ **this dissertation further relies on the theoretical framework developed by memory scholars.**

The most relevant framework for this research is **memory activism**, primarily developed by sociologists Elizabeth Jelin (2003) and Yifat Gutman (2017b). Jelin analysed South American societies’ struggle to deal with the violent past of military dictatorships and build a democratic future, emphasising the grassroots, bottom-up movements that challenged state-controlled narratives about the past. Thus, in Jelin’s research, memory activism emerges after authoritarian regimes. Gutman (2017b) expanded the concept by applying it to the Israeli-Palestinian context. In particular, she focused on Israeli activist efforts to create space for alternative narratives of the 1948 war and the *Nakba*, which refers to the Palestinian ethnic cleansing through the deprivation of their land, (memory) spaces, properties and violent displacement. Most importantly, Gutman (2017a, 2017b) defined memory activism and endorsed its relevance across diverse geopolitical contexts where state-driven commemoration was insufficient or contested. The memory activism framework was recently enhanced by the extensive 598-page *Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (Gutman et al.



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2023), attributing memory activism as a subfield of memory studies. The editors Gutman and Wüstenberg (2023) defined memory activism as

the strategic commemoration of a contested past to achieve mnemonic or political change by working outside state channels. [...] [M]emory activists identify as non-state actors, acting outside state channels to challenge the official public memory, but their efforts can also be directed at defending the status quo or official historical narratives from change. Memory activists can thus both have a disruptive or reproductive role in struggles over how the past is remembered and it is employed across the political spectrum. (Gutman and Wüstenberg 2023, 5)

Memory activism highly depends on **agency**: it relies on deliberate and strategic actions undertaken by concerned citizens, NGOs and/or artists. Memory scholars Jenny Wüstenberg and Aline Sierp (2020) offer a broad conceptual framework that considers both bottom-up and top-down as well as horizontal activities and explores how they correlate.

Simultaneously, their edited work *Agency in Transnational Memory Politics* employs Astrid Erll's (2011b) concept of *travelling memory* to develop the idea of **transnational memory**.

Transnational memory appears relevant to this study because I focus on the artistic attempts to extend the Srebrenica genocide memory beyond BiH and/or regional borders. Based on Wüstenberg and Sierp's (2020) work, this study explores 1) the role of the selected artists, who appear as **memory agents**, 2) their motivations to do memory work: raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide (not only on the local and regional but also on the global level), and 3) their network and/or interconnectivity with each other. Additionally, Chapter 6 employs the typology for comparative research on memory activists developed by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021) to study the agency in each case and its characteristics.

Even though memory activists deal with the complex and traumatic past, besides the aims of truth and justice, they also orient towards a sustainable future. According to cultural and comparative literature scholar Ann Rigney (2018), past-oriented research on the traumatic past has dominated the agenda of memory researchers and proved ineffective in dealing with new challenges. Therefore, she proposes integrating more positive and future-oriented

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elements that could bring about social changes. Specifically, Rigney suggests benefitting from social movement scholarship, combining them under the memory-activism nexus (i.e., *memory activism*, *memory in activism*, and *activism in memory*). This research employs Rigney's nexus, adding the art component. Finally, it focuses on future-oriented alternative commemorative art practices that not only open up (memory) spaces for remembering the victims but also contribute to peace-building in the post-Yugoslavian *region of memory* and beyond.

### **Existing Scholarly Research: Identifying the Research Gap**

In **the post-Yugoslav context**, interdisciplinary conflict and peace researcher Orli Fridman has the most extensively developed and applied memory activism framework. First, Fridman (2015) explored alternative calendars and memory work in Serbia, focusing on the Srebrenica commemoration in Belgrade. Second, Fridman and Hercigonja (2017) investigated the anti-government protests in the context of memory politics of the 1990s in Serbia. Third, Fridman (2020) dealt with peace formation from bottom-up initiatives by studying the “Mirëdita, dobar dan” festival, which brings artists, activists, and youth from Kosovo and Serbia together to counter everyday nationalism in deeply divided societies. Fourth, together with Katarina Ristić, Fridman contributed to theoretical and empirical works from the memory studies field *Agency in Transnational Memory Politics* (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020). Their chapter “Online Transnational Memory Activism and Commemoration” (Fridman and Ristić 2020) focused on White Armband Day (bcs. *Dan bijelih traka*) on-site and online commemoration that, from a local and regional level, became a transnational commemorative event.

Most importantly, Fridman (2022) released an extensive monograph *Memory Activism and Digital Practices after Conflict: Unwanted Memories*, in which in addition to exploring

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#WhiteArmBandDay, she examined other initiatives, such as #Sedamhiljada (#Seventhousand to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Srebrenica in Serbia), #NisuNašiHeroji (#NotOurHeroes to condemn the ICTY convicts that appeared as heroes and celebrities in the region of memory: Serbia, Croatia, BiH, and Kosovo) and #JesteSeDesilo (#ItDidHappen to fight hegemonic narrative of Serbia, claiming that there was no war in Serbia). Her monograph (2022) laid the foundations for more advanced (hashtag) memory activism and alternative commemorative practices framework. Fridman (2019) also contributed to *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* with her short article “Conflict, Memory, and Memory Activism: Dealing with Difficult Pasts.” One of her most recent contributions on the COVID-19 global pandemic’s impact on commemorations and increasing online mnemonic practices (Fridman and Gensburger 2023) appears in the *Handbook of Memory Activism*. Her last article (2024) employs the memory-activism nexus to demonstrate how the memory *of* activism and the memory *in* activism manifest between different generations in Serbia, with a particular focus on the 2023 protest, which created a *déjà vu* effect of the protests of the 1990s. Although Fridman mainly focuses on the Serbian context, her works remain a crucial reference point for studies on the *region of memory*, i.e., the post-Yugoslav space.

While Jelin, Gutman, Wüstenberg, Fridman, and other scholars who contributed to the *Handbook of Memory Activism* have laid a strong foundation for exploring memory activist initiatives, they have paid relatively **little attention to the role of art within memory activism**. This gap opens space for the concept of *memory activism*, which refers to using art as a tool in activist efforts to challenge or reshape established narratives. Despite the lack of comprehensive research in this area,<sup>8</sup> some studies have begun to address the intersection of

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that my focus here is more on texts written in English, whereas Latin American literature (in Spanish) addressed art, memory and activism long before it became a theme in European memory studies. My



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art and memory activism. For example, Dragičević Šešić (2016) analyses the emergence of counter-monuments and anti-monuments, where artists collaborate with concerned citizens to create alternative memorials in the post-Yugoslav space. The edited volume *Women Mobilizing Memory* (Altınay et al. 2020), which brings together around 30 authors, also analyses in detail artistic practices with links to activism.<sup>9</sup>

*The Handbook* (Gutman et al. 2023) briefly mentions artistic expressions in memory activism. To illustrate, Robles-Moreno (2023) and Rigney (2023) contribute to this discourse by examining art's role in memory practices. The volume additionally includes activists' voices; for example, Di Lellio (2023) explores Kosovar Alketa Xhafa-Mripa's participatory art installation, *Mendoj për Ty (Thinking of You)*, which commemorates survivors of sexual violence during the Kosovo conflict. Furthermore, Whigham (2023) presents an interview with Aida Šehović about her nomadic monument ŠTO TE NEMA, which became one of my case studies. In composing the stimulating *Memory Activism Manifesto*, Reading (2023) emphasises the importance of art in facilitating memory activism. However, despite these contributions, the existing literature does not fully explore the role of art in commemorating historical events nor provides a clear framework for understanding the intersection between memory activism and artistic expression, without a few exceptions (Dragičević Šešić 2016; Altınay et al. 2020; Murphy 2021a, 2021b; Rigney and Smits 2023a; Taylor 2020). Hence, **this research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the role of art as a catalyst for change and commemoration. Additionally, it proposes a framework for analysing memory activist initiatives** alongside slightly less socio-politically engaged alternative commemorative art practices.

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reviewer Daniele Salerno highlights the contributions of Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard, performance professor Diana Taylor, and researcher Ana Longoni on art and activism in Central and South America.

<sup>9</sup> I am grateful to Daniele Salerno for pointing this out; although I read this book at the start of my research, for some reason it fell out of my bibliography.

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## Contribution and Strengths of this Dissertation

This dissertation aims to address these gaps by making several critical contributions to the field of memory studies. First, it responds to the call of third-wave memory studies scholars (Rigney 2018; Fridman 2022; Gutman et al. 2023) to **integrate more inclusive, future-oriented elements**<sup>10</sup> that have the potential to bring about positive social changes in transnational memory politics rather than solely concentrating on the traumatic past. This research focuses on alternative commemorative art practices and the potential of artists to promote peace-building and positive change in the Srebrenica memory landscape by challenging and moving beyond nationalist and rigid narratives.

Second, **this study contributes to the theoretical advancement** of the relationship between **memory, art and activism** in memory studies. I propose to extend Rigney's (2018) memory-activism nexus by **adding a new element of art**. Despite a long-standing focus on art, European memory studies has yet to establish clear definitions that include memory, art and activism components. Nor has it offered practical tools for exploring alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives. I intend to address this gap in the existing literature by proposing the analytical device that might be applied in analysis focusing on the memory-art-activism relationship based on the artwork's level of engagement with socio-political issues and emphasis on memory (see Chapter 3). By drawing inspiration from *memory activism* (Jelin 2003; Gutman 2017b; Fridman 2022; Gutman et al. 2023) and *art activism* (Serafini 2018; Salzbrunn 2020, 2021; Sholette 2022) study frameworks and critically engaging with them, I seek to explore and clarify the definitions of commemorative art, memory art (Huyssen 2022), alternative commemorative art and memory *artivism*

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that this wave and its emerging elements of hope were inspired by second-wave memory researchers, particularly Marianne Hirsch and Andreas Huyssen, whose earlier research revolved around trauma, representation and cultural memory. However, as memory studies evolve, Hirsch (Altınay et al. 2020) and Huyssen's (2022) have increasingly engaged with the globalisation of memory, reflecting the themes and concerns of the third wave.

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(Dragičević Šešić 2016). Therefore, this work not only fills a significant gap in memory studies but also **establishes a framework** for analysing how art serves as a tool for both remembering the past and envisioning a different future. Most importantly, it offers a set of **analytical tools** for researching alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives.

The empirical part of this research explores **the importance of non-conventional forms of remembering and their role in creating an alternative/virtual space to commemorate and mourn**. As artistic initiatives may blur the “boundaries between memorial commemoration and aesthetic experience” (Demaria et al. 2022, 2), I argue that specific forms of art contribute to fostering empathy in divided societies (and beyond) following the Yugoslav wars. It advances understanding of what happened in the 1990s by addressing the loss of human lives, generating access to spaces and memories that are otherwise restricted or denied. Thus, in addition to memory studies, the dissertation contributes to broader fields such as peace and conflict studies, art activism and cultural studies.

Finally, by bridging theoretical and empirical insights, this dissertation offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the evolving role of art in shaping both the memory and the future of contested narratives and spaces.

### Research Questions and Objectives

This dissertation analyses the role of alternative commemorative art and memory activism initiatives in shaping the local, regional and transnational Srebrenica genocide memory landscape, particularly in the context of ongoing political polarisation and nationalism. I am

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interested in how selected initiatives narrate, represent, and iconise<sup>11</sup> the Srebrenica genocide and human loss and what (additional) meanings they generate to existing narratives, usually expressed through traditional forms of remembrance. As the recent memory studies research highlights the role of agency and networks, I direct my attention to memory *agents* and their motivations for engaging in remembrance work. I argue that such commemorative practices open up (memory) space to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and generate an effect of transnational mourning, contributing to the recognition of victims as well as peace formation in the post-Yugoslav *region of memory*.

### **Core Research Questions:**

- How do alternative commemorative art initiatives narrate, represent and iconise the Srebrenica genocide, and what meanings do they generate?
- What additional meanings do they generate to existing narratives, usually expressed through traditional forms of remembrance?
- Do they generate new narratives and memories? To what extent and how do they reshape the Srebrenica genocide memory landscape?
- What is the artists' role of agency in transnational memory politics?
- How do these initiatives generate broader access for remembrance and mourning?

### **Secondary Research Questions Assigned to Each Chapter:**

**Chapter 1:** How is narrative framing reflected in historiography? How does the concept of agonistic memory address gaps in historiography, particularly in acknowledging conflicting

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<sup>11</sup> To iconise means to create new symbolic representations that become widely recognisable and meaningful beyond the original context of the genocide. Specifically, it refers to how certain initiatives re-semantise the coffee ritual, transforming it into a symbolic medium or mnemonic device that conveys aspects of the tragedy.

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perspectives within collective memory? What are the main conflicting and co-existing narratives of the Srebrenica genocide?

**Chapter 2:** What are the main historiographical interpretations of the Srebrenica genocide? What is the role of the legal perspective in the Srebrenica memory landscape? What is the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Srebrenica regarding genocide aftermath?

**Chapter 3:** What is the relationship between memory, art and activism? What has already been done to explore this nexus, and what are the gaps in the field of memory studies that require further investigation? What is the shift in monumentality and monumentalisation, and how does it relate to my selected alternative commemorative art and memory activist practises?

**Chapter 4:** How is the Srebrenica genocide commemorated through conventional forms of remembrance? What is the role of the Srebrenica Memorial Centre in the Srebrenica memory landscape? What new commemorative forms emerge, and what factors contribute to their emergence? Why do some artists incorporate the coffee ritual in their remembrance practices dedicated to the Srebrenica genocide? What is the significance of the coffee ritual in Bosnian culture, and why is it effective?

**Chapter 5:** How can alternative commemorative art and memory activist practices be researched? How were the three case studies selected? What methodologies were employed in collecting, handling and analysing interviews? What are the limitations and peculiarities of audience sampling and ethical considerations?

**Chapter 6:** What are the three selected case studies, and what meanings do they generate? What connects and differentiates these cases? What are the contexts and technical infrastructures in which these cases emerge? Who are the artists? What are their

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backgrounds? What are the relations of production? Do those art initiatives relate to each other, and how? What motivates artists to participate in the commemorative process and become *memory agents*?

**Chapter 7:** How do audiences and participants understand and interpret the selected alternative commemorative art and memory activism initiatives? What are their evaluation and criticisms? How do they describe the atmosphere and feelings they experienced? What is the perceived impact? What do they see as the purpose of each artistic initiative? How do they assess the general reception? What parallels do they draw in the broader context? Can audiences and participants become new witnesses of the tragedy through the given agency?

**Chapter 8:** What do respondents think about the artistic choice of using the coffee ritual to discuss the genocide in Srebrenica? What does coffee mean to them? Do they relate to such a ritual? What does drinking coffee mean in different contexts? How did the general public understand the use of coffee?

### **The Main Objectives:**

- To analyse the historical, political, and cultural factors that have shaped the memory landscape of the Srebrenica genocide, particularly in the post-conflict context and the ongoing genocide denial.
- To explore three selected alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives and evaluate their social, cultural, and political roles in shaping the local, regional, and transnational memory landscape of the Srebrenica genocide.
- To analyse how different target audiences (e.g., family members of victims and survivors, Bosnians, younger and older generations, foreigners and *implicated subjects*) engage with alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives.

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- To examine whether non-conventional means of remembrance, such as alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives, are more effective than traditional forms (e.g., official memorials, state-sponsored ceremonies) in engaging audiences and cultivating the memory of international crimes, such as genocide, through emotional, educational, and cultural impact.
- To develop a theoretical and methodological framework for analysing alternative commemorative art and memory activist practices, which can be applied to other contexts of violence, conflict, and genocide globally, focusing on how these practices mediate memory, trauma, and justice.

### **Methodologies Employed: How to Research Alternative Commemorative Art and Memory Artist Practices?**

The project employs a **mixed methodological framework** for analysing commemorative art practices created during doctoral studies. First, **Multimodal Discourse Analysis** (Kress 2010, 2012) is used to examine various dimensions of selected artworks. Second, **qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews** with artists, audience members, and/or participants—conducted both live and online—offered deeper insights about the artworks. These interviews are coded using inductive **qualitative content analysis** (Kuckartz 2014), assigning categories and sub-categories that emerge from the data (Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas 2017). Third, Stuart Hall's (1973) **Encoding/Decoding Communication Model** is combined with Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of **Critical Discourse Analysis** (CDA) to explore what meanings the artists generate and how their audience interprets the artworks. Additionally, Fairclough's model enables the study of the socio-political context in which discourses emerge and interact, while Hall's model sheds light on the technical infrastructure, production relations, and knowledge frameworks in the communication process. Such combination contributes to understanding the power dynamics embedded in communication

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(Kupetytė 2022, 2024) and exploring whether these created meanings by artists and audiences contribute to certain narratives.

The author intends that the methodological framework she has created will prove helpful in the examination of alternative commemorative art and/or memory activist practices that emerge in contexts where violence, conflict, and international crimes, including genocide, have been experienced or are currently taking place.

### Limitations and Biases

The study includes several limitations and biases. First, I did not attend all events<sup>12</sup> and often relied on secondary sources (interviews and internet sources, including social media newspaper articles and similar materials).

Second, interviews were conducted at different times—some years after the events, others immediately after—which introduces variation but also enriches the study by offering both long-term and immediate impressions. The ŠTO TE NEMA interviews were conducted at least three years after the last event, with some interviews reflecting a gap of up to 16 years, which may have led to memory fading. Interviews with 8372 participants were conducted approximately one year after the performance. However, both ŠTO TE NEMA and 8372 participants often recalled details vividly, indicating the profound impact of the event. For the other initiatives, such as *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 and MTYOL, interviews were a mix of real-time and shortly afterwards. While this reflects both spontaneous and long-term impressions, it also challenges consistency.

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 5, especially subsection 5.1.4 and Figure 5.3 for more information about the chronology of art initiatives, my attendance and the interviews I conducted.



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Third, audience interview samples have revealed bias. The ŠTO TE NEMA audience sample, in particular, was notably biased. Many participants were closely connected to the artist Aida Šehović or were activists/concerned citizens found through social networks, leading to a relatively homogeneous sample. This lack of real-time interviews limits the spontaneity of responses, and most interviewees had significant prior knowledge of the Srebrenica genocide. However, finding occasional participants after a few years is very difficult, if not impossible. In the cases of 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* and MTYOL, some participants were also closely associated with the artist, which influenced their responses.

A few Bosnian respondents had a direct connection to Srebrenica. At the same time, some (or their older family members) witnessed ethnic persecution in one way or another and could partly relate to what happened in Srebrenica. Their connection to the trauma and memory of forced displacement makes them witnesses and (post-)witnesses of the Bosnian war and the Srebrenica genocide, giving them a sense of responsibility to bear witness to atrocities, even if they did not experience them themselves. Meanwhile, foreign respondents, especially from the UK and Slovenia, can be identified as *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019) in the sense that they are indirectly connected to the tragic event through the broader role their home countries (under-)played in the Srebrenica genocide.

Audiences for the three initiatives varied slightly: MTYOL had a diverse mix of senior theatre-goers, while *8372 and Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* attracted many young art professionals. ŠTO TE NEMA participants were primarily Bosnian, while the other audiences were more culturally diverse. Women were more represented overall, except for MTYOL and Zajc's performances, where gender balance was more even. Despite these limitations, the diversity of responses provides a more comprehensive understanding of the audience's experiences.

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## Personal Biases Influencing Research Approach

In acknowledgement that no scholar is free from the influence of their background, I wish to present my positionality as a factor that has shaped the lens of perception that informs this dissertation. I am a white Eastern European woman from Lithuania, mainly trained in the international environment, researching memory and *artivism* in the Balkans (and beyond the region). While I am neither a Western scholar—often distant from the region’s context—nor a complete outsider, I believe this position offers a unique perspective, allowing me to approach the subject with both sensitivity and critical distance. Also, conversant knowledge of the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (BCS) language allows me to navigate cultural nuances and engage more effectively with local communities and texts, enriching my research. The remaining language gaps were filled in with the help of the language instructor, Nataša Tadić, but any remaining mistakes are my responsibility.

Regarding education, my BA studies at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) primarily shaped me as a traditional historian. However, a BA minor in art history broadened my education. MA in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES, University of Bologna) has provided me with global critical and in-depth knowledge of the South/Eastern European region. Also, through MIREES, I gained valuable experience incorporating methods and theories from different fields, such as film, media and communication studies, sociology, and cultural and peace studies, which was essential for my PhD project. This dissertation primarily draws on memory studies frameworks that are new to me and my research, integrating insights from art, cultural studies, history, and historiography. In addition to descriptive, analytical, comparative and synthesis methods used in historical research, it draws on combined qualitative methods from social research and communication studies.

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I position myself on the moderate left side of the socio-political spectrum. Although my research focuses on memory activism, I do not consider myself an activist, apart from occasional digital interventions such as social media posts or stories advocating for vulnerable social groups and their struggles. This position presents both challenges and advantages. While I am not an insider to the communities I study, this allows me to approach the subject with a certain distance, enabling me to maintain a critical perspective that can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the issues. Finally, my work could also be described as postmodernist because I look at how the audience understands the central theses of artistic works and how those works talk to them.

### **Ethical Considerations for Handling Collected Interviews**

This research comprises 49 interviews with artists and their participants. Consequently, it is essential to establish an ethical framework to safeguard the interests of those involved. The collected data was de-identified to the greatest extent possible to protect anonymous interviewees' privacy and security. Given the small and interconnected nature of the arts community, anonymisation went beyond changing names, requiring the concealment of specific biographical details to prevent identification. In some cases, where experts like Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls, PhD candidate Alex Haycock, former MEP David Hallam, and teatrologist Igor Tretnjak participated, interviews were left non-anonymous with their consent. Their expertise was central to the analysis, and anonymising would have compromised the depth of their contributions. Interviews with artists, actresses, and the mentor were also non-anonymous. However, due to the political climate in BiH, the author, either voluntarily or upon request, withheld some sensitive private information. All interviews were voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time. The annexes include the orientational questionnaires (see Annexes 4–14) and examples of consent forms (see Annexes 1–3), ensuring ethical standards.

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## Dissertation's Structure Explained

The dissertation is structured as follows: an introduction, 8 chapters (2 theoretical chapters, 1 methodological chapter, and 5 empirical chapters), conclusions, references, and 19 annexes.

**Theoretical Chapters:** **Chapter 1** examines narrative framing in historiography, while **Chapter 3** discusses key concepts from memory studies.

**Methodological Chapter:** **Chapter 5** outlines the research tools for analysing alternative commemorative art and memory activist practices.

## Empirical Chapters:

- **Chapter 2** analyses the historical context and central historiographical positions.
- **Chapter 4** examines the development of the Srebrenica genocide commemorations from 1996 to the present.
- **Chapter 6** explores selected initiatives and interviews with their creators.
- **Chapter 7** inspects participants' backgrounds, reactions and interpretations.
- **Chapter 8** investigates how audiences perceive the artists' decision to incorporate coffee rituals into their works.

Some chapters are not entirely homogeneous. For example, theoretical Chapter 1 also includes the author's empirical observations on principal narratives of genocide, while Chapter 4 integrates theoretical insights from memory studies.

## The research questions determined the structure of each chapter:

**Chapter 1** examines the latest debates on narrative framing in historiography and historical theory, focusing on how historiography shapes narratives and interpretations of historical events. I illustrate a network of interacting ideas by connecting constructivist, narrativist, and post-narrativist approaches, multiperspectivity, and (critical) pluralism to arrive at the interdisciplinary concept of **agonistic memory**. The latter acknowledges conflicting

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perspectives within collective memory and allows for the deconstruction of contested histories and unresolved traumas, such as the Srebrenica genocide, where multiple narratives often clash. Thus, agonistic memory fills the gap in dealing with conflicting narratives I have identified in historiography.

Finally, Chapter 1 reveals the conflicting or co-existing narratives surrounding the Srebrenica genocide, using critical pluralism, antagonistic, cosmopolitan and agonistic modes of memory as analytical tools. Also, it raises a **hypothesis** that cosmopolitan-agonist art initiatives might not only challenge the established narratives but also go beyond them, creating their own narrative(s). It argues that art can be a form of a narrative that counters hegemonic narrative(s) and re-imagines alternative socio-political trajectories through its unique language.

**Chapter 2** builds on the theoretical framework established in Chapter 1 to carry on historiographical research. It begins by reconstructing the events of July 1995, providing a comprehensive overview of the Srebrenica genocide and its historical context. Then, it analyses major historiographical interpretations using Wulf Kansteiner's model, focusing on the three primary modes of historical writing: description, narration, and argumentation. The third section discusses the Srebrenica genocide's significance as the only event adjudicated as genocide by the ICTY, exploring the 'judicial narrative' and the legal perspective of the genocide. Finally, the chapter examines the societal impact of the genocide and the current situation in BiH, including ongoing genocide denial. Overall, this chapter aims to provide information about the Srebrenica genocide, its aftermath, and the contemporary context in Srebrenica and the broader region while also reviewing existing historical scholarship.

**Chapter 3** examines the relationship between memory, art and activism. It draws primarily on memory studies, presenting the framework of memory activism, the memory-activism

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nexus and the notion of memory *agents* as theoretical tools for exploring the phenomenon of memory activism. It highlights the lack of focus on art within the memory activism framework, suggesting the concept of *memory activism* that refers to the importance of art in activist efforts to challenge or reshape established narratives. The second section designs and explores the nexus of memory, activism, and art. It starts from the art-activism nexus developed by art scholars and practitioners, who embrace the scholarship from social movements. Then, it follows the memory-art relationship discussed by memory scholars. Finally, it suggests the memory-art-activism nexus, additionally illustrated through the graph and the table. Such nexus proposes three outcomes—memory art, alternative commemorative art, and memory activism—based on engagement with socio-political issues and including the memory element. The third section discusses the shift from traditional to non-traditional forms of remembrance, emphasising the evolving significance of art in monumentalisation and the emerging gender dimension. Also, it discusses how this shift relates to my selected alternative commemorative art and memory activist practises.

**Chapter 4** traces the evolution of Srebrenica genocide remembrance from its beginnings to the present day. It starts with analysing traditional forms of commemoration at local, regional, and international levels, including the established symbols and memory sites. The first section reviews these early efforts to remember the genocide, focusing on the Srebrenica Memorial Centre as the fundamental institution of genocide memory preservation. The chapter then shifts to non-traditional forms of remembrance, such as contemporary artworks, emphasising initiatives incorporating the coffee ritual in their remembrance practices. The subsection of the second section treats the coffee ritual as a carrier of cultural memory and explores its' cultural significance in BiH and the region.

**Chapter 5** develops a methodological framework to explore alternative commemorative art and memory activist practices. The first section 1) justifies the selection of arts initiatives, 2)

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introduces Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model of Communication, 3) develops a methodological framework to analyse how artworks communicate meaning and how audiences perceive them, and 4) explains the process of collecting, handling and analysing interviews, including limitations and ethical considerations. The second section explores the challenges of interviewing different audiences, introduces them individually, and addresses audience biases.

**Chapter 6** introduces each initiative, providing background information interwoven with artist quotes to capture its essence and underlying meanings. The second section compares the three initiatives, starting with Hall's (1973) model to analyse the context (technical infrastructure, production relations, knowledge frameworks) that shaped the encoding of each initiative. Multimodal discourse analysis is then used to explore the sensory aspects of each artwork. The last subsection examines the selected art initiatives through the lens of memory studies and explores the artists' agency in the transnational memory landscape of the Srebrenica genocide, arguing that artists act as memory activists in acknowledging war crimes, coming to terms with the past, and working towards post-war peacebuilding.

**Chapter 7** examines how audiences interpreted and understood the selected art initiatives. It considers both positive and negative critiques of the participation experience, the atmosphere created, the feelings experienced, the perceived impact, the purpose of each work of art and the general reception. Additionally, it presents the parallels respondents drew with the broader context and history and their socio-political critique. The analysis showed that audiences interpreted the art initiatives very similarly to how the artists conceived, with occasional different interpretations, but these were sporadic and not predominant.

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**Chapter 8** explores the audience's perspectives on using coffee to discuss the genocide in Srebrenica. In particular, it looks at how respondents felt about including coffee, their coffee connection, what coffee means to them and in different contexts, and how coffee drinking relates to other beverage rituals. Exploring these cross-cultural parallels illustrates how everyday practices, such as coffee drinking in BiH or tea traditions in England and Russia, serve as vehicles for preserving and expressing cultural and social meanings. The chapter concludes that the stronger the personal relationship with coffee (ritual) and the richer the local coffee culture, the broader the interpretation of the artistic choice to use coffee in their works. It also introduces respondents' opinions about how the general audience understood the employment of coffee according to them.

Finally, the author presents her **conclusions**, lists of **references** and **annexes**, which include 1) anonymous and non-anonymous consent forms for informants to participate in the research (Annexes 1–3); 2) orientational semi-structured questionnaires for interviewees (Annexes 4–14); 3) a table reconstructing the *My Thousand Year Old Land* stage representations and linking them to the sources of inspiration (Annexe 15); 4) a table (sub-)categorising the interviews with the artists, showing artistic intentions and encoded meanings (online [Annexe 16](#)); 5) three tables (sub-)categorising the interviews with the audiences/participants, showing their interpretations (online Annexes [17](#), [18](#) and [19](#)). These extended online annexes provide an opportunity to look at the complete picture of the data collected and categorised.



# 1 Narrative Framing in Historiography

This chapter aims to unpack the latest debates on narrative framing in historiography (here, professional historical writing) and historical theory. It explores the role of historiography in shaping both the narratives and the interpretations of historical events. As the philosopher of history, Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen (2015, 158), claims, the existing historiographical knowledge determines emerging scholarship, meaning that no history work appears in a vacuum. Thus, every historian must position their work within existing historiographical debates to be evaluated by other professional historians. Accordingly, I aim to create a cohesive thread that bridges constructivism, narrativist and post-narrativist approaches, multiperspectivity, and pluralism and arrive at the interdisciplinary concept of agonistic memory. Connecting these concepts illustrates a network of ideas that sometimes overlap, interact, or complicate one another, creating a more dynamic relationship rather than presenting a linear progression.

I began with an examination of constructivist epistemology in social sciences. I then explore how this constructivist framework applies to professional historical writing. Two major constructivist approaches to historical work—representationalism and non-representationalism—will be discussed in detail. Building on this, I will then move to narrativist and advanced post-narrativist approaches, which critique and extend the constructivist tradition. Next, I present and compare the concepts of multiperspectivity and pluralism, particularly concerning historiographical practice, the interpretation of contested histories, and relativism. Although multiperspectivity and pluralism highlight the importance of multiple conflicting narratives, navigating the tension between them remains unclear. Drawing on memory studies and political theory, the concept of agonistic memory suggests that engagement of conflicting narratives is a healthy practice of a democratic society,

whereas seeking a reconciliatory consensus only weakens social cohesion. By embracing conflict, agonistic memory creates a framework for deconstructing and decontextualising contested histories and memories. It thus becomes a powerful tool for exploring how society deals with unresolved historical traumas, such as the Srebrenica genocide, where multiple narratives continue to conflict. Agonistic memory presents the theoretical perspective that guides this dissertation and addresses the complexities of historiography that historians have struggled to unravel. The final section explores the conflicting or simply co-existing narratives surrounding the Srebrenica genocide, using the concepts of critical pluralism, antagonist, cosmopolitan and agonistic memory modes as tools.

### ***1.1 Constructivist Epistemology: Giving Sense to History***

*[...] '[C]onstructed' does not automatically mean 'unreal' [...] neither does 'constructed' mean 'unjustified.'* (Kuukkanen 2015, 151)

Constructivist epistemology stands for a theory of knowledge or research philosophy, which claims that reality and knowledge are socially constructed: shaped by societies, cultures, connections, institutions and the world around us (Downes 1998). As stated in the quote above, constructions are not unreal. Constructivists accept the physical world's existence as they deal with it but argue that people (including scholars) primarily give sense to objects. According to them, the world is already there, but it seems meaningless before one gives it any sense (Crotty 1998). Contrary to positivism, which believes there is one absolute truth to discover, constructivism declares that multiple realities exist as individuals develop in non-identical communities. Therefore, constructivism rejects the idea of one correct meaning or sense. Individuals or scholars, in this case, construct it as indicated by the word's root. According to constructivists, potential meanings may exist, but the actual meaning comes with awareness (Crotty 1998). However, not all meanings hold equal values: some are more relevant and fulfilling than others. As Downes (1998, 1778) described, "[c]onstructivism is

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antirealist and relativist: constructivists reject the view that science discovers a determinate structure to reality and they reject the view that scientific knowledge is achieved by following one particular rational method.” So, constructivists value subjectivity, which enriches research by challenging presuppositions and avoiding limitations. However, according to Crotty (1998), constructivism is not entirely led by subjectivism, as meaning is not *created* but constructed. Crotty (1998) notes that constructivism combines objectivity and subjectivity, inextricably holding them together. Regarding criticism, constructivists may appear as self-avowing relativists, rejecting absolute and objective truth. In addition, critics accuse constructivists of assuming that scholars and ‘scientists literally ‘make the world’, in the way some make houses or cars’ (Downes 1998, 1778). Nevertheless, constructivism offers valuable instruments for investigating knowledge, affecting many branches of science and disciplines.

The history discipline was no exception. Half a century ago, a *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* by Hayden White (1975)<sup>13</sup> marked a significant break in historiography, the philosophy of history and history theory, and attained much criticism. One of the most controversial ideas White proposed was that historians reimagine the past and, in that way, construct a narrative<sup>14</sup> of what happened. This approach differed from the positivist belief that historians seek objective truth through empirical evidence and try to discover ‘what *actually* happened in the past.’ In turn, many constructivists (narrativists in particular) claim that a written narrative is only one of many possible interpretations. That does not mean that they reject the importance of facts. Constructivist historians believe that bare facts do not have any meaning before historians make sense of them:

A fact does not carry a meaning. Meaning is imposed on facts in their employment and figuration, whether in history writing or in more everyday practices of understanding. Yet these processes do not take place in a vacuum either, but always in a discursive

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<sup>13</sup> First publication in 1973.

<sup>14</sup> I go deeper into narrative theory of history and narrative constructivism in the following section.

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context, as so clearly stated by White above;<sup>15</sup> they take place within a particular “cultural endowment” that defines the parameters for intelligibility. (Pihlainen 2017, 23)

Historians are those who are in charge of endowing past events with structure and meaning in their historical works. Past events as such do not constitute a final story, they are neither intrinsically comic nor tragic. It is up to historians to use their “disciplined imagination” in shaping the final outcomes of their work. (Zeleňák 2023, 250)

Pihlainen (2017) develops five arguments to defend constructivist thinking that reasonably reveals its essence in historiography. First, constructivism is not about primitive ‘narrative.’ Instead, it centres around a comprehensive understanding of discourse and representation. Second, constructivism goes beyond a focus on “language.” It delves into the expansive meaning-making process encompassing socio-cultural codes, embodied meanings, culturally embedded values, practices, linguistic rules, and literary tropes, often explicitly emphasised. Third, constructivism, both in an epistemological context and within history, rejects the antirealist or ‘anything goes’ position as history discipline requires referring to the facts and past. However, the relationship between realism and constructivism is not just a black/white parallel, as Zeleňák (2023) argues:

Constructivism is opposed to a realist view, but to specify in detail the differences between these positions might be complicated, especially because there might be some overlaps. Some realists might be open to certain construction and some constructivists may accept certain realist assumptions. Still, to simplify, constructivism emphasises that historical works are in a significant manner constructed, either because there is certain narrative structuring going on or because there are linguistic, ideological or other factors which decisively shape the final outcomes of historians. (Zeleňák 2023, 249–50)

Fourth, according to Pihlainen (2017), constructivism primarily focuses on ethics, politics and consequences, shifting away from the theory of knowledge. “To make the constructedness of all sense and meaning visible is first and foremost an ethical-political

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<sup>15</sup> Pihlainen (2017) has in mind White’s quote in “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, edited by Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki, 41–62. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978, p. 49.

Alternative source that I found available and cite later: “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” in his book “Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism,” p. 87.

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issue. Once we stop expecting meanings to somehow magically appear from facts, the ideological nature of practices of figuration becomes foregrounded,” argues Pihlainen (2017, 23). His final point highlights that constructivist historians fundamentally care about the politics of the past and the politics of historical representation rather than the ‘fact or fiction?’ question as positivists would believe. These arguments by Pihlainen (2017) precisely unpack the nature of constructivism in the discipline of history.

Nevertheless, constructivist views diverge among historians. Zelenák (2015) calls them *Two Versions of a Constructivist View of Historical Work*: representationalism and non-representationalism. Although both approaches refuse the idea that history seeks to offer a truthful and objective image of the past, they have different perceptions towards (historical) representations. Kuukkanen (2015, 53) defines ‘representation’ as “a two-place relation, creating a link between two variables: one that represents the other that is thus represented.” It could be a copy, a substitution or a symbol (but not the replacement) (Kuukkanen 2015). Representationalism supporters (including Arthur Danto, Louis Mink, and Frank Ankersmit<sup>16</sup>) perceive historical works as historical representations; however, their view towards representations differs from naïve realism. This view is less straightforward but rather complex, indirect, holistic, and retrospective (Zelenák 2015). Representationalists suggest placing the third element (suggested by text) between the text and the past. Such an additional layer enables going beyond the text and the past reality. “[A] two-level picture is replaced by a more complex, three-level picture of history” (Zelenák 2015, 214), and that adds elaborateness and solidness to the simplistic approach. However, such an approach does not convince opponents.

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<sup>16</sup> See Kuukkanen’s (2013) article to follow the broader discussion. According to Kuukkanen, White and Ankersmit, in particular, have refused the copy theory of representation, but in spite of that, claimed that historiography produces representations. Kuukkanen suggests rejecting representationalism altogether.

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Non-representationalists (such as Paul Roth and Kuukkanen) refuse the ‘representation’ definition as it leads to epistemological misinterpretation. Kuukkanen (2015) argues that historical text cannot represent or ‘stand for’ the past itself. Meanwhile, Zelenák (2015) outlines three reasons why the representational approach appears problematic. First, it maintains the realist attitude of historians ‘trying to capture the past.’ Second, the third item and its nature appear doubtful. Finally, it implies a metaphysically challenging commitment to separate form and content. Non-representationalists highlight the significance of constructing historical works that emerge from particular historiographical practices. Roth (Zelenák 2015) remarks that historians and not the past reality (through evidence) create the categories to make sense of past events. He encourages giving up on interpreting history through correspondence or representation and instead paying attention to “interpersonal coordination,” past habits, and “community-sanctioned practices of projection” (Zelenák 2015). For Kuukkanen (2013; 2015; Zelenák 2015; Simon and Kuukkanen 2015), history appears as a discursive practice that presents arguments but does not ‘re-present’ anything. Instead, Kuukkanen suggests the notion of ‘presentation’ and claims that history is a ‘presentational’ activity rather than ‘re-presentational’ (Kuukkanen 2015). That does not mean that non-representationalists deny the past (Zelenák 2015). Instead, they argue that the past is not linked with historical works as ‘representation’ would suggest. Hence, non-representationalists assign a new role to the past in historiographical construction.

### ***1.2 (Post-)Narrative Constructivism: Narrating History***

*For the narrativist, the historian is a kind of descriptivist storyteller. In my view, the historian is a critical reasoner.* (Kuukkanen 2015, 67)

Pihlainen (2017) recognises a shift towards *narrative constructivism* within the broader historical constructivism framework, guided by the mentioned-above White and like-minded

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theorists Frank Ankersmit and Keith Jenkins.<sup>17</sup> As the notion indicates, narrative constructivists concentrate on how narratives and stories are constructed to make sense of past events; they focus on ‘meaning-making processes of histories’ (Pihlainen 2017, 26). In particular, they highlight the significance of storytelling, the subjective nature of historical narratives, and the subjective understanding of history. For them, history is not objective nor fixed but instead emerges as human interpretation. Aiming for a more comprehensive understanding of history, narrative constructivists challenge grand or master narratives. Also, they pay attention to the power dynamics and discourse in historiography. Thus, such historians see themselves as active agents, shaping historical narratives and constructing history: they decide what events to emphasise, how to interpret facts and evidence, what values to follow and which voices to include. Moreover, they promote the idea of multiple truths and perspectives, so narrative constructivism stands for *histories* rather than *history*.

In both constructivism and narrative constructivism, language shapes the narrative and the choice of words, framing, and storytelling techniques contribute to constructing historical meaning. Thus, narrative theorists of history pay massive attention to language and discourse, which is never neutral: they “[...] consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences” (White 1978, 82). In this way, history intertwines with literary theory, which many historians highly criticised (Pihlainen 2017, 26). In *The Historical Text as Literary Artifact*, White (1978) applies fiction theories to historiography and aims to dissolve the disciplinary boundary: “Historians may not like to think of their works as translations of

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<sup>17</sup> Kuukkanen (2015, 16) also identifies early narrativists: Arthur Danto, W. B. Gallie, Louis Mink, and Morton White. However, he starts the section on narrativism by claiming that “[t]here is no doubt that Hayden White’s *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973) transformed the landscape of theory and philosophy of history and historiography” (Kuukkanen 2015, 21).

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“fact” into “fiction”; but this is one of the effects of their works,” he argued” (White 1978, 92). For that reason, White and Ankersmit are also known as linguistic narrativists, while Paul Ricoeur and David Carr appear as phenomenological narrativists (Kuukkanen 2015). Both kinds of narrativists believe that historiography demands narratives and consider historical writing a narrativist practice (Kuukkanen 2015, 72). Despite being the founder of narrativism in historiography, White did not define the ‘narrative’ well in his *Metahistory*. For Ankersmit, narratives were not equal to stories; they rather offered viewpoints of the past (Kuukkanen 2015, 23). Kuukkanen (2015, 24) concludes that ‘narrative’ goes beyond ‘story’ and relates to unifying structure, which enables historians to present their research results.

Narrative constructivism, which evolved from White’s *Metahistory*, has received much criticism from other history theorists for breaking with traditional canons in historiography. First, critics accused narrative historians of relativism, i.e., considering all historical perspectives equally valid and reducing history’s ability to differentiate between well-founded interpretations and false claims. For example, Carlo Ginzburg blamed White for reducing history to narrative forms and downplaying the importance of the historian’s empirical work and search for the objective truth (Kansteiner 1993). Ginzburg found White’s belief in different versions of history unacceptable. Mainly because, in Ginzburg’s view, White’s narrativist approach could potentially reinforce Holocaust denial and fascist ideologies, undermining the factual integrity of historical events like the Holocaust, which must remain inviolable. Therefore, Ginzburg’s critique goes beyond historiography, as he touches on the social and ethical consequences of such narrative-driven writing. However, Kansteiner (1993) notes that Ginzburg fails to distinguish between moral and epistemological relativism, whereas White’s concerns were more epistemological than Ginzburg acknowledges. The challenge, notes Kansteiner (1993, 274), lies in how historians can write history and displace unwanted elements of the past without recourse to the concept of



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historical truth. The White–Ginzburg controversy, therefore, highlights two opposing positions in historiography: postmodernism/constructivism versus empiricism/microhistory, making it one of the most significant intellectual debates of the 1970s and 1980s and remains nonetheless relevant today. Secondly, critics denounced the rigidity of White’s formalism and the lack of historical dimension in narrative discourse analysis (Kansteiner 1993). Indeed, White responded to criticism, addressed the concerns and revised his approach. This polemic shaped how his thought developed over time, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach. White’s contribution became an essential theoretical navigation point for discussions of history and narrativity.

Today, narrative constructivism does not sound as shocking as it did for many historians in the ‘70s or ‘80s. Indeed, it became the influential and leading theoretical approach in historical theory and historiography (Kuukkanen 2015, 7–8; Zeleňák 2015). To improve the existing narrativist theoretical framework, contemporary historians have developed the post-narrativist approach. The *Postnarrativist Philosophy of Historiography* by Kuukkanen (2015) became the first solid attempt to establish a position in the field. Kuukkanen (2015) draws on narrativist insight, but simultaneously, he goes beyond narrativism in historiography. For Kuukkanen (2015), the writing of history is not a narrative storytelling but a rational and argumentative practice to establish new facts and persuade the reader. According to Kuukkanen (2015), narrativism (by White and Ankersmit in particular) converges into three concepts: representationalism, constructivism and holism, so he challenges each concept in his monograph, providing suggestions for the new post-narrativist framework.

First, instead of representationalism, Kuukkanen (2015) proposes non-representationalism. While narrativists identify narrativism with representationalism (i.e., aim to represent and re-create the past in their works), Kuukkanen argues that historians should be occupied with reasoning and argumentation; therefore, they produce presentations instead of

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representations. Second, Kuukkanen dismisses holism and argues that the thesis' meaning should be separated from its evidence. By doing so, he aims to separate historiography from the artistic works that are wholes and promote historical writing as a rational-argumentative practice. Third, Kuukkanen accepts constructivism, elaborating that constructed meanings must be rational and well-justified, which narrativists sometimes lack. Therefore, he suggests three dimensions of historiographical evaluation: 1) the rhetorical, 2) the epistemic and 3) the discursive. Finally, Kuukkanen touches upon the question of objectivity and subjectivity. He reasons that historiography includes both, highlighting that one should consider the level of objectivity and subjectivity in a particular historical work. So, the higher the originality, the more subjective the history work becomes. The more cautious historian might be more objective but probably produces very dry and non-engaging writings. Kuukkanen's (2015) monograph undoubtedly laid the foundation for further studies and the development of the post-narrativist approach; however, his work has limitations.

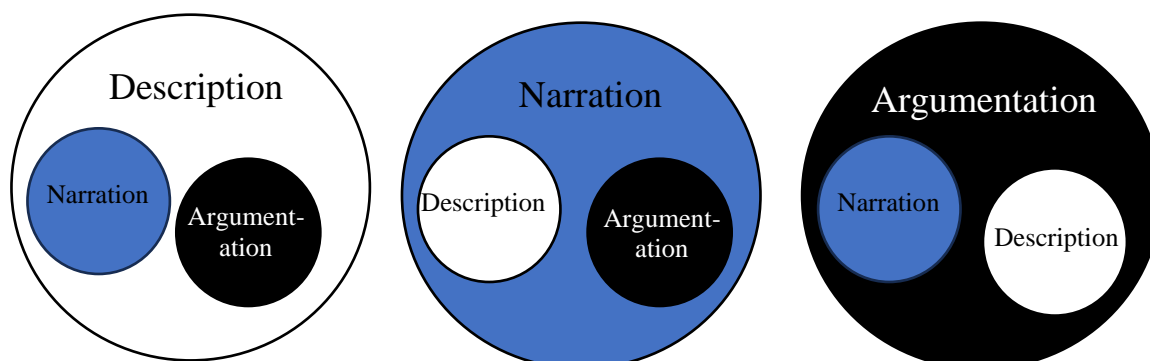
A decade has passed since Kuukkanen's (2015) work was released; hence, the post-narrativist philosophy of history attained new elaborations. Probably the most extended contribution comes from historian, historical theorist, and memory studies scholar Wulf Kansteiner (1993, 2021). By leaning on narratologists,<sup>18</sup> Kansteiner (2021) suggests an analytical method to explore historiography by utilising three fundamental textual modes or text types (description, argumentation and narration) in historical writing. Description mode corresponds to past reality, narration—crafts captivating narratives, and argumentation type develops compelling arguments. “[...] [A]lmost all professional history texts seek to capture past reality (description), deliver a good story (narration) and make a compelling case about the nature of the past, the relation between past and present, and the mistakes of other

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<sup>18</sup> In particular, Kansteiner follows text linguist Carlota Smith (*Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

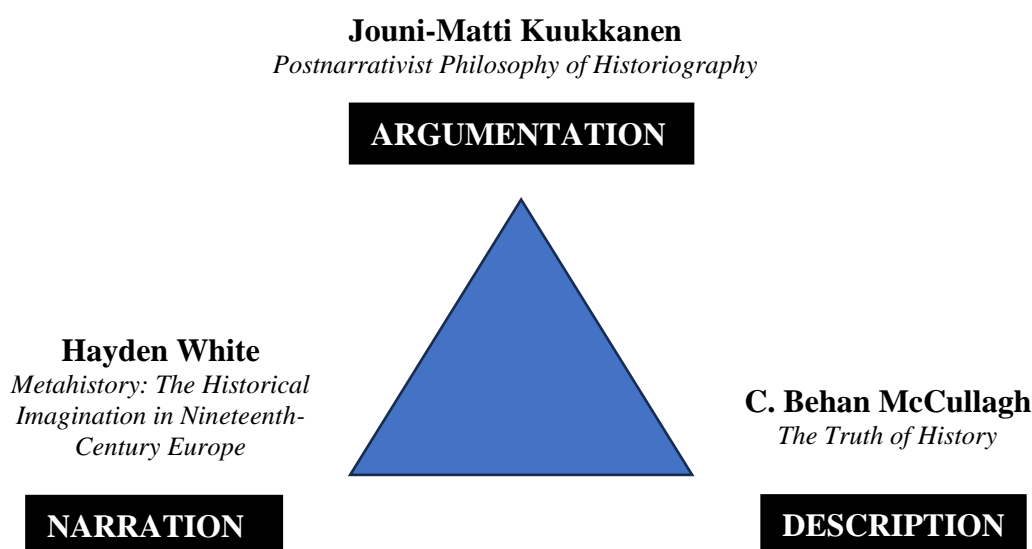
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historians (argument)” (Kansteiner 2021, 53). According to him, all such texts are hybrid and include all modes, but one mode usually dominates (Fig. 1.1).<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 1.1: Three Types of Historical Writing by Wulf Kansteiner**

This scheme is a replica from Kansteiner’s online lecture “Meta-Holocaust: A Multi-Directional Theory of History” (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022). Such relation is also described in his chapter *History beyond Narration: The Shifting Terrain of Bloodlands* (Kansteiner 2021)



**Figure 1.2: Three Primary Modes of Historical Writing by Wulf Kansteiner**

(This triangle a replica from Kansteiner’s online lecture (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022). Such relation is also described in his chapter (Kansteiner 2021) but the lecture provides even more details

<sup>19</sup> While focusing in particular on argumentation type, Kukkanen (2015, 93) remarked that historical works include descriptive or narrative parts as well.

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To better illustrate his proposed analytical tool, Kansteiner draws a triangle between these three primary modes of historical writing (Fig. 1.2) in his online lecture<sup>20</sup> (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). Kansteiner links each of the three modes to three leading philosophies of history and their agents. So, each angle represents a mode and a philosophy elaborated in a historical theory. The first theory of *correspondence* (between historical writing and the past) *through the description*, elaborated in C. Behan McCullagh's *The Truth of History* (1997), defines the descriptive mode. The descriptive type appears to be the most accepted and widely employed by historians, according to Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). The second theory of *aesthetic/ideological experience through narration* claims that description and factuality are less critical tasks of a historian. What matters is the narrative and an aesthetic experience that create pathways for forming ideological identity and marks a linguistic turn in historical theory (Kansteiner 2021). Therefore, already discussed White's *Metahistory* (1973) stands for narration mode. Finally, the third, the newest theory, focuses on *intellectual intervention through argumentation*. It argues that professional historical writing does not correspond to past reality per se nor offers an entertaining narration. Instead, it focuses on argumentation and provides a fascinating argumentative structure to convince the reader. So, Kuukkanen's *Postnarrativist Philosophy of Historiography* (2015) illustrates his theory based on argumentation mode. Nevertheless, Kansteiner makes no secret that more modes could exist but focuses on these three as he finds them fundamental.

Kansteiner (2021) argues that Snyder's *Bloodlines* (2010) is a highly argumentative piece, although it furtively pretends to be descriptive. *Bloodlines* certainly includes narration, but the *texter*<sup>21</sup> has a detached attitude to delve into a complex narrative; instead, he applies a

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<sup>20</sup> *Meta-Holocaust: A Multi-Directional Theory of History*. This lecture complements his chapter (Kansteiner 2021) and includes even more details.

<sup>21</sup> Notion introduced by Kansteiner (2021, 55), who treats the author separately from the *texter*:

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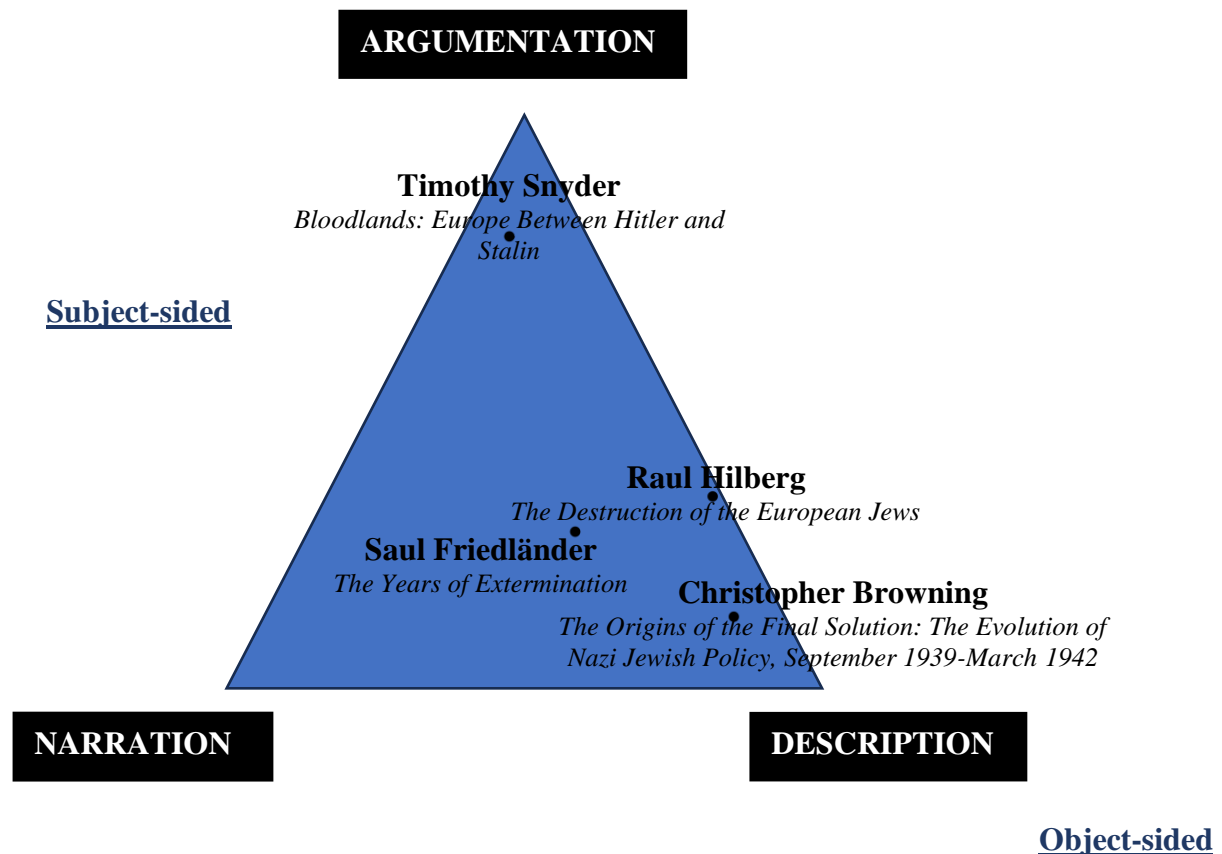
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very straightforward approach to present factual information to shock the reader. Kansteiner (2021) asserts that Snyder intends to persuade the reader of the significance of Stalinist crimes and draw comparisons to those of the Nazi regime. While this approach may be acceptable, the failure to explain the primary intention in the introduction makes *Bloodlines* problematic. Thus, Snyder's *Bloodlines* (2010) appears close to the 'argumentation' vertex in the triangle.

In contrast to Snyder's, Browning's and Hilberg's texts are primarily descriptive. Although Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961, 1985, 2003) provides powerful arguments, it lays the descriptive groundwork (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). Thus, Hilberg's text leans more towards descriptive mode but includes argumentative and narrative features. Browning's *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2004) appears highly descriptive as it aims to deliver a highly empirical description, excluding ideology (which Hilberg's work includes, for example). *The Origins of the Final Solution* contains two texts as Browning invited his colleague Jürgen Matthäus to contribute to his book. Interestingly, Matthäus' text has a different perspective than Browning's, so the work offers unplanned and intense multi-perspectivity (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). Finally, Friedländer's text has enormous and very different ambitions, including the ambition of narration. However, his agenda is primarily descriptive as he seeks to reveal how the Holocaust victims felt. As time and place constantly change, Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b) finds the narration unreliable. Also, Friedländer's text argues more than Browning's, so he occupies an interesting position in the triangle.

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"[...] I want to differentiate between the real author, Timothy Snyder, on the one hand, and the figure of the text that is permanently inscribed into a given piece of historical scholarship, on the other hand. The figure of the text is an element of the text and defined in similar terms as the figure of the narrator in narrative-literary theory. For literary experts, the narrator is a key element of every literary fiction. It might be explicitly identified in the text and can even be involved in events under description, or it might never appear in person and look at events from a great distance."



**Figure 1.3: Main historiographical positions on Holocaust according to the modes of historical writing by Wulf Kansteiner** (this triangle is a replica from Kansteiner's online lecture (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022). This positionality is also explored in his chapter (Kansteiner 2021)

Kansteiner (2021) considers Hilberg's and Friedländer's works as masterpieces. These pieces lean on the descriptive mode, as indicated in the triangle. Though the question of a narrative type in professional Holocaust literature arises, Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b) did not locate any such texts. However, he reasons that popular media, films on the Holocaust, popular science magazines and Holocaust memoirs produce narrative-type texts. Professional Holocaust literature usually starts with the description and advances in argumentation, according to Kansteiner. Figure 1.3 illustrates how Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b) considers objectivity and subjectivity, following Kuukkanen's (2015) guidelines. Snyder's *Bloodlines* (2010) presents innovative but contentious arguments, leaning towards subjectivity, while the three other positions

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appear more moderate and objective. Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b) concludes that most professional Holocaust historiography works are object-sided rather than subject-sided, as White may assume.

Narrativists and post-narrativists agree that the fundamental task of historians goes beyond historical facts. Indeed, obtaining facts straight matters, but this is only the first step.

According to narrativists, the primary function of historical writing is not to prove or list facts but rather to present them within larger conceptual schemes. Such writing can be evaluated based on its quality; one can distinguish between more or less successful historical writing and develop criteria for assessing the concepts (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). Meanwhile, post-narrativists abandon this dualistic perspective (Zeleňák 2023). For them, professional history involves making persuasive arguments. They value the structure, relationship between the arguments, and empirical basis for these arguments so that these relationships can be accessed according to their suitability and integrity. Kansteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b) finds this innovative approach fruitful as it moves the historical theory beyond the deadlock: pre-narrativists and narrativists have not found much common ground in the last 50 years. The post-narrativist approach suggests the broader perspective and the third way that may become a promising option for further motion in historiography.

### ***1.3 Multiperspectivity = Pluralism?***

I had intended to introduce the concept of multiperspectivity when I discovered that historical theory often uses a distinct lexicon. A notion of ‘pluralism’ appears much more common among professional historians and history theorists (White 1986; Zeleňák 2023), while the research on history teaching employs the term ‘multiperspectivity’ (Stradling 2003; Wansink et al. 2018; Abbey and Wansink 2022). However, history philosophers like Ankersmit and

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Roth sometimes employ such terms as ‘perspectives’ or ‘points of view’ to make their point.<sup>22</sup> In his article *Global History, Pluralism, and the Question of Traditions*, Dominic Sachsenmaier (2010), historian of Modern China, focuses on multi-perspectivity debates alongside the *plurality of ‘traditions’* in global history. This section explores and compares both approaches, drawing specific conclusions for this study.

‘Multiperspectivity’ is frequently used in literature, history education and social sciences but is rarely defined (Stradling 2003). To proceed further, one needs to comprehend its origin and meaning. Literary studies appear to be the most effective means of understanding multiperspectivity. Narratologist Marcus (Hartner 2012) defines multiperspectivity (or polyperspectivity) as a narration or representation feature that includes multiple perspectives/points of view of a specific subject or event:

In the study of narrative the term ‘multiperspectivity’ is employed in a variety of different and often incongruous ways. Nevertheless, the arguably most common usages of the term refer to multiperspectivity either as a basic aspect of narration or as a mode of storytelling in which multiple and often discrepant viewpoints are employed for the presentation and evaluation of a story and its story world. In the contexts of both definitions, the perspectival arrangements in multiperspective narratives may fulfil a variety of different functions; mostly, however, they highlight the perceptually, epistemologically or ideologically restricted nature of individual perspectives and/or draw attention to various kinds of differences and similarities between the points of view presented therein. In this way, multiperspectivity frequently serves to portray the relative character of personal viewpoints or perspectivity in general. (Hartner 2012)

Multiperspectivity relates to the philosophy of perspectivism (developed by Friedrich Nietzsche, José Ortega y Gasset and Lanier Anderson (Hartner 2012), which is an early form of epistemological pluralism (Sandywell 2011a). Nietzsche rejected unitary and monological systems, suggesting that there are numerous perspectives for understanding reality. These perspectives vary historically and across disciplines, moral systems, world-views, and cultural orientations. He refused the idea of one absolute truth, reality or interpretation. Thus, perspectivism rejects the realist belief that events can be captured ‘as they actually were’

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<sup>22</sup> Eugen Zelenák, Email discussing multiperspectivity and plurality, December 9, 2023.



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(Sandywell 2011a). Collectivist perspectivism supplements that social reality is constructed based on varying social interests and through collective world-making processes. “This produces a relativist epistemology in which whole societies and cultures ‘construe’ the world in terms of their own dominant belief systems, collective interests and preferred world-views. Such world-interpretations are not anchored in the minds of isolated individuals or private conceptions of the real (the relativism of personality) but disseminated through the collective imaginary structures that govern whole societies and civilisations,” explains Barry Sandywell (2011b). He also notes that collectivist perspectivism disagrees with the ‘anything goes’ philosophy and sympathises with the constructivist philosophy of cultural semiopraxis (‘the worlds we inhabit have been created and can be recreated by specific forms of human symbolic construction and technopoiesis’ (Sandywell 2011b). In this context, Sandywell (2011b) suggests differentiating various forms of relativism, for instance, moving universal relativism apart from social constructionism. He proposes that belief in ‘socially constructed’ reality may favour the epistemology of systemic pluralism. In conclusion, multiperspectivity, stimulated by perspectivism, rejects the idea of a single absolute truth and underscores the importance of diverse viewpoints in shaping our understanding of reality.

In history education, multiperspectivity is a pedagogical approach that seeks to include multiple narratives, particularly those previously silenced and oppressed by dominant linguistic and cultural groups. Multiperspectivity can also be employed as a method to engage students and foster the development of critical thinking. For decades, history education has been taught from a monocultural, ethnocentric and nationalist perspective. The first attempts to make education more inclusive arose in Western and Northern Europe in the 1970s and early 1980s<sup>23</sup> (Stradling 2003). After the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the violent

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<sup>23</sup> It goes without saying that before reaching the school education level, studies were conducted at the academic level, expressing the interest towards ignored groups (women, people with low incomes, ethnic minorities, children, families and migrants), particularly in social history, cultural history, and gender studies.

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dissolution of Yugoslavia, the ideas of a more inclusive teaching of history reached Central, Eastern and Southern Europe (Stradling 2003). In 2003, the Council of Europe sponsored a guide for history teachers to include a multiperspective teaching approach (Stradling 2003). Moreover, in 2011, the Council of Europe released recommendations to member states regarding intercultural dialogue and the representation of the ‘other’ in history teaching. Accordingly, European countries apply multiperspectivity in history teaching differently (Wansink et al. 2018; Wendell 2018; Abbey and Wansink 2022).

The general idea of multiperspective education is to prepare students for a globalised, ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse world and foster a sense of global awareness, interconnectedness, cultural sensitivity, respect and empathy for others.

Multiperspectivity has two preconditions: “first, a willingness to accept that there are other possible ways of viewing the world than one’s own and that these may be equally valid and equally partial; and, second, a willingness to put oneself in someone else’s shoes and try and see the world as they see it, that is, to exercise empathy” (Stradling 2003, 14). K. Peter Fritzsche called multiperspectivity a process or a strategy of understanding the other and their perspective, enriching our own point of view (Stradling 2003). Cherishing such values and more inclusive education are vital after conflicts but matter in every environment. Moreover, multiperspectivity suggests a holistic approach to understanding complex issues and enables students to consider interconnectedness in solving multidimensional problems.

Pluralism indicates the (co-)existence of multiple concepts, scientific worldviews, discourses, and viewpoints related to a particular subject. The implications of this multiplicity vary depending on the subject area (Mason 2006; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2023). Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary (2023) suggests four definitions for pluralism. Only the third definition corresponds to this study: pluralism is “a) a theory that there are more than one or more than two kinds of ultimate reality; b) a theory that reality is composed of a

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plurality of entities’’<sup>24</sup> (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary 2023). So, pluralism extends beyond describing diversity, and it also stands for theoretical framework or approach.

Sandywell (2011c) provides an even more detailed explanation:

[Pluralism is] [t]he endemic and irreducible heterogeneity of values, reality orientations and world experiences. Exemplified in modern thought by the writings of such thinkers as William James, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber, Alfred Schutz, Aron Gurwitsch, Alfred North Whitehead, Isaiah Berlin, Richard Rorty, Paul Feyerabend, Nelson Goodman and Joseph Margolis. All of these thinkers in their different ways are anxious to ‘overcome’ the Platonic/ Aristotelian heritage of metaphysical discourse in order to engage with plural ‘realities’, ‘orders of life’, ‘provinces of meaning’ or ‘multiverses of discourse’ as the first requirement of an open-minded philosophy. (Sandywell 2011c, 477)

In history, pluralism emphasises the existence of various historical accounts, which often compete or present differing interpretations of specific events (Zelevák 2023). It seems that pluralism, compared to multiperspectivity, is more about the coexistence of different narratives that do not necessarily seek active integration as multiperspectivity does. While multiperspectivity examines events from multiple perspectives, considering various viewpoints contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the historical event (Stradling 2003; Wansink et al. 2018; Abbey and Wansink 2022; Wendell 2018), pluralism recognises and accepts multiple, diverse narratives and interpretations which may co-exist without merging (Zelevák 2023). However, as mentioned before, multiperspectivity does not have a clear definition, so variations of this term simultaneously may differ among historians. For example, for Sachsenmaier (2010), multiperspectivity simply means including the Chinese perspective within a particular global history discussion overpowered by a Eurocentric approach. He urges historians not to focus on one tradition and to look at the same subject or event differently. Sachsenmaier (2010) treats pluralism/multiperspectivity not as an approach

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<sup>24</sup> The fourth definition of pluralism also makes sense for this research: “a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization” (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary 2023).

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but as a fact that historians must consider. Hence, interpretations and applications of pluralism and multiperspectivity might vary, adding a layer of complexity to these concepts.

The previous discussion suggests that pluralism and multiperspectivity share more similarities than differences. Like pluralism, the multiperspective approach considers diverse perspectives, rejecting the idea of a single, dominant narrative. Similarly, they challenge traditional historical practices that often marginalise particular perspectives. According to both approaches, historical events appear complex and multidimensional, and thus, they require a more comprehensive understanding and consideration of various perspectives.

Regardless of how attractive pluralism and multiperspectivity may seem at first sight, they raise many challenges and considerations in the historical method. A question arises as to whether these perspectives have equal weights regarding the context and potential biases. Simultaneously, interpretive challenges emerge when there are too many perspectives. Critics may also argue for a more critical evaluation of the sources and their reliability. In addition, historians who employ pluralist and/or multiperspective approaches may be accused of lacking *objectivity*. However, the most significant defect of these approaches is (historical) relativism: can historians write whatever they desire? Zelenák (2023) believes they cannot, so he draws on philosopher Donald Davidson and proposes giving up on the dualistic framework related to the representationalist view of history and correspondence. According to Zelenák (2023), relativism arises when different schemes (including concepts, conceptual schemes, frameworks, perspectives or forms) are applied to the same data, facts or content.<sup>25</sup> To avoid that, one must abandon this dualistic worldview (scheme/content or mind/world distinctions).

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<sup>25</sup> Eugen Zelenák, Email discussing dualistic framework, December 21, 2023.

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The term ‘multiperspectivity’ appears too close to dualistic thinking, so Zelenák (2023) avoids discussing multiple perspectives on the same content.<sup>26</sup> He promotes a representation-free, non-dualistic approach to history embodied by the works of post-narrativists Roth and Kuukkanen. According to Zelenák (2023), these historians demonstrated the best way to avoid representationalist and dualist views: i.e., abstain from employing various theoretical frameworks or perspectives to facts in historical writing. It sounds like a perfect idea, but one may question its feasibility.

No historian is free from their background, including social positionality (class, gender, race, and socioeconomic status). Every historian brings a different setting, including cultural context, values and beliefs, as well as personal encounters. Education and intellectual traditions mean no less, as they form the lens of perception. All historians are subject to ideological influence. White (1975) demonstrates that even the works of historians and philosophers of history who had no political interests, such as Burckhardt or Nietzsche, have a specific ideological subtext. Also, ideology determines the choice of the research object. It is no coincidence that historians choose topics that concern them personally. Even historiographical schools are ideologically charged (for example, by Marxism or feminism). In addition, nobody can run away from politics, and historians often participate in it.<sup>27</sup> Finally, contemporary issues also matter, as none of us live in a vacuum. Current events, debates, and societal concerns may shape the lens through which historians raise questions and engage with material. Not considering those schemes or perspectives on data and content could lead to dishonest and undercover historical writing. I argue that one may try quitting

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<sup>26</sup> Eugen Zelenák, Email discussing multiperspectivity and plurality, December 19, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> At least three historians became presidents, including Adolphe Thiers (France), Woodrow Wilson (the United States) and Franjo Tuđman (Croatia), not to mention the other essential power positions history graduates often occupy. During my first Erasmus+ exchange in Zagreb, I was informed that everyone who wants to become a successful politician (or a president!) in Croatia enrolls in history.

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the dualistic framework, but the audience must be informed about the texter's intentions and background to ensure transparency.

Pluralism and multiperspective approaches may lead to relativist traps, but if reasonably and wisely utilised, they could also reveal the complexity of the historical event. White (1986) calls a position that avoids relativism critical pluralism. Such a version of pluralism acknowledges the multiplicity of historical events while employing a critical approach to analysis and such (or slightly similar) approach I would like to apply in this research.

Unfortunately, historical scholarship did not extensively develop or explore the concept of critical pluralism. At this juncture, memory studies enter the discussion, offering much more profound and grounded research on the plurality of perspectives than history and/or historiography. Undoubtedly, insights from the memory field inform historical research by highlighting the significance of memory in shaping historical narratives and collective consciousness. Agonistic memory is one of the most promising concepts concerning (conflicting) narratives and the importance of their interaction. Also, it shares significant contact points with the above-discussed critical pluralism. Both approaches reject the notion of a singular, dominant narrative and emphasise the value of diverse and even contradictory narratives. Critical pluralism can also serve as a foundation for agonistic memory, which has been relatively well-developed recently and will be discussed in the following section.

### **1.4 Agonistic Memory**

*[A]gonistic mode of remembering, in addition to exposing the socially constructed nature of collective memory and including the suffering of the 'Others', would rely on a multiplicity of perspectives in order to bring to light the socio-political struggles of the past and reconstruct the historical context in ways which restore the importance of civic and political passions and address issues of individual and collective agency. (Bull and Hansen 2016, 402)*

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The concept of agonistic memory was inspired by political theorist Chantal Mouffe's (2005, 2013) scholarship on agonism in politics. Mouffe argues that conflict and antagonism (i.e., destructive conflict) are regular practices of everyday human reality; however, it is crucial to transform antagonism into agonism in order to create a space for different (and even opposing) political ideas to engage and compete without being reduced to violence or destruction. Based on such an approach, Italian history and politics scholar Anna Cento Bull and Spanish studies professor Hans Lauge Hansen (2016) developed a concept of agonistic memory. Bull and Hansen define three narrative modes<sup>28</sup> of remembering: antagonist, cosmopolitan and agonist. Antagonist mode refers to the emergence of national identity and the tension between 'us' and 'them,' which continues to be promoted by populist nationalist and/or radical right movements. Placed in a historical context, these categories of 'us' and 'them' can refer to victims and perpetrators. The cosmopolitan mode eliminates conflict, but it is based on the moral struggle between ideas or systems. This mode emerges from a profoundly Eurocentric perspective and is often embraced by EU politicians and memory experts. The narrative here belongs to the victims of all sides. While the antagonist mode demonises the 'other,' the cosmopolitan narrative focuses on reconciliation and promotes shared history. However, according to Bull and Hansen, the cosmopolitan narrative risks oversimplifying the past conflict and erasing the specificities of individual group experiences, which leads to the dehumanisation of both victims and perpetrators and artificial reconciliation. Hence, cosmopolitan memory opens the doors for radical right movements to reject the cosmopolitan narrative by offering their alternative—antagonist—narrative.

Therefore, Bull and Hansen (2016) propose the third mode of agonism, which treats conflict as an opportunity for open pluralistic dialogue about the past. The agonistic mode accepts the complexity and contestation of past events and seeks constructive engagement between

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<sup>28</sup> Bull and Hansen build on the Astrid Erll's (2011a) concept of 'narrative modes.'

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conflicting parties. The idea is to encourage post-conflict societies to come to terms with their violent pasts by acknowledging different sides of history without forcing a consensus. Bull and Hansen (2016) also propose the guidelines for utilising the agonistic memory approach, which I aim to apply in explaining the broader Srebrenica genocide context in section 2.1:

(1) avoid pitting ‘good’ against ‘evil’ through acknowledging the human capacity for evil in specific historical circumstances and in the context of socio-political struggles; (2) remember the past by relying on the testimonies of both perpetrators and victims, as well as witnesses, bystanders, spies and traitors. The perspectives of the former perpetrators can provide crucial elements for understanding when, how and why people turn into perpetrators; (3) recognise the important role played by emotions and promote empathy with the victims as a first step towards remembering the past in ways that facilitate and promote critical understanding and also acknowledge civic and political passions; [...] (4) reconstruct the historical context, socio-political struggles and individual/collective narratives which led to mass crimes being committed. (Bull and Hansen 2016, 400)

The agonistic memory concept has been adapted and further developed under the Horizon research project *Unsettling Remembering and Social Cohesion in Transnational Europe* (UNREST, 2016-2019), led by the already mentioned Kansteiner and another historian, Stefan Berger. Their decision to deal with agonistic memory only underlines the proximity of history and memory studies. So, the goal of the UNREST was to rethink the consensual collective memory promoted by the EU, applying the agonistic approach. It is important to note that Kansteiner and Berger acted as both theorists and practitioners. Besides experimenting with agonistic memory in the research field, the project generated cultural events like the curated exhibition *Krieg. Macht. Sinn. Krieg und Gewalt in der europäischen Erinnerung* translated as *War. Power. Meaning. or War Makes Sense. War and Violence in European Memory* and theatre performance *Where the Forest Thickens*, aiming to utilise agonistic perspective in practice. Even more exciting, the exhibition included agonistic games that adopt less familiar perspectives for the viewer (those of perpetrators, bystanders and collaborators), and the game audience reception was researched by Angeli et al. (2021).



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The exhibition catalogue (Berger and Kansteiner 2019) precisely defines the three modes of memory and deliberately explains the need to consider agonistic memory:

Antagonistic collective memory corresponds to the regime of the populist right-wing: it divides arguments between good = “us”, and bad = “them”. It is not reflexive but uses extreme views in the manner of a monologue and mobilises emotional affiliation to seemingly exclusive national communities of collective memory. (Berger and Kansteiner 2019, 19)

A cosmopolitan collective memory corresponds to the EU approach good and bad are allocated to ideologies, rather than actors. Good = democracies, bad = totalitarian systems. Here, the collective memory focuses on the victims of totalitarian systems and on their suffering. It admits only a strictly limited number of perspectives: this way, views that diverge from the aimed-for consensus can be excluded. The dialogue in the cosmopolitan collective memory aims for a consensus. It too mobilises emotions, but they are emotions of sympathy with the victims of totalitarian regimes. (Berger and Kansteiner 2019, 19–20)

The third approach, agonistic remembrance does not make a primary distinction between good and bad, but seeks to contextualise socially and historically, after a comprehensive study of the past; that is, it seeks to understand, and to understand the perpetrator of violence, too. It is radical in its embracing of multiple perspectives. It does not exclude or marginalise. Its dialogue has an open structure, one that does not necessarily aim for consensus. Agonistic remembrance does not however renounce values. Instead it aims to give voice, in the broadest sense, to a humanistic left-wing political position. The agonistic approach seeks to strengthen social cohesion and to be more effective against the revival of antagonistic forms of remembrance by populist right-wing elements than the cosmopolitan approach to remembrance. (Berger and Kansteiner 2019, 20)

The book, comprising eight chapters, *Agonistic Memory and the Legacy of 20th Century Wars in Europe* (2021a), provides a solid summary of the findings and contributions of the UNREST project, in which Bull and Hanser collaborated. Interestingly, the research group have finally tested agonistic memory in theory and practice, leading to exciting results. First, Berger and Kansteiner (2021b) admit that their primary assumptions about the effects of cosmopolitan memory were wrong: the integration of cosmopolitan memories in war museums evoked a much deeper emotional experience for the audience than the UNREST team expected. Second, the research group notes that the cosmopolitan mode of remembrance dominates most Western-Northern European war museums, while East-Central European museums often practise antagonism. Agonistic discourses rarely appear in such museums, but

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they serve as powerful counter-hegemonic narratives when they do. Finally, according to Berger et al. (2021), oral history can effectively contribute to such narratives.

	<i>Nationalistic- antagonistic mode</i>	<i>Universalist-cosmopolitan mode</i>	<i>Agonistic mode</i>
<b>Conflict Morality: Good/evil</b>	Contemporary conflict necessary in order to 'regain' a future conflict-free society  Related to characters  Us = good Them = evil	Society is potentially harmonious built on humanitarian values and human rights  Related to abstract categories  Democracy/human rights = good, totalitarianism = evil	Recognition of society as ontologically conflictive  Moral categories are deconstructed through historical contextualisation
<b>Reflexivity and dialogue</b>	Self-consciously unreflexive, monologic	Reflexive: exposing the constructed nature of memory.  Consensually dialogic (Habermas) and ditto multiperspectivist	Reflexive: exposing the constructed nature of memory  Open-endedly dialogic (Bakhtin) and radically multiperspectivist
<b>Empathy and emotions</b>	Empathy with <i>our</i> past sufferings, passion of belonging, demonising the evil other(s)	Compassion for human suffering on either side of the conflict	Passions for collective solidarity, the defence of democratic institutions and hope for social change
<b>Perpetrator/ victim perspectives</b>	Perpetrator perspective presented as victim Us = heroes and victims, them = perpetrators	Emphasis on victims' sufferings on all sides	Learning from the memories/perspectives of victims, perpetrators and third-party stakeholders
<b>Historical context</b>	Manipulated, historical events turned into myths	Transcended, universalised	Remembering historical context and socio-political struggles

**Figure 1.4: Updated characteristics of remembering modes** taken from Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021, 17)

In Chapter 2, Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021) reconsider the cosmopolitan mode, recognising that their critique was not directed at all forms of cosmopolitanism but at 'universalist-cosmopolitanism' in particular, which "emerged as a narrative deconstruction of the antagonistic mode in more artistically ambitious cultural products from the mid-1980s and forward." (Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González 2021, 18). They criticise universalist-cosmopolitanism for oversimplifying local or global politics and promoting an overly optimistic view of harmony and cooperation among diverse actors. As a result, they present a

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table of the updated characteristics of remembering modes (see Figure 1.4) and remind us that these modes should not be considered actual social realities but rather serve as ideal types. Additionally, Ferrándiz and Hristova (2021, 63) observe that all three memory modes are closely connected and barely could exist on one's own: "The contradictions in the field therefore show us that the three memory modes do not exist independently, but in a relational way reacting to the specific type of hegemonic discourse in each context."

Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021, 19) see agonistic memory "as an instrument for the re-politicisation of the public sphere by unsettling both discriminatory and xenophobic discourses." According to them, agonistic remembrance must include the perspective of the perpetrators so that the public can understand what drove the perpetrators to do what they did and in what context in order to prevent a similar outcome. However, they stress that such understanding does not legitimise the crimes committed:

Does that mean that we will have to understand the Nazi perpetrators responsible for the Holocaust? Yes and no. Yes, because we need to understand what kind of social and political conditions it takes to make normal people turn into war criminals, believing they are doing the right thing. If we do not, we are not able to see the same conditions emerging in contemporary society. And no, because we cannot allow this understanding to become an excuse or legitimisation of the crimes committed. Agonistic remembering is in this sense critical towards all historical agents who in the past instigated and/or escalated violence as a political means. (Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González 2021, 20)

To prevent the legitimisation of past wrongdoings, authors suggest 'radical multiperspectivism' as a strategy that offers understanding by including the 'other' side(s) without justifying their actions. However, incorporating the perpetrators' perspective can be risky in highly antagonistic and unsettled contexts like Bosnia and Herzegovina (further BiH or Bosnia). In this case, Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021, 27–28) suggest combining cosmopolitan and agonistic approaches by 1) revealing the social construction of cultural memory, 2) acknowledging the 'other' as a human being, and 3) upholding respect for fundamental human rights. Kansteiner and Berger (2021) also observe that integrating agonistic remembrance with cosmopolitan values might be beneficial in many cases. Firstly,

agonistic memory alone may be challenging to use, as it is not easy to grasp. Secondly, it may be an ineffective tool on its own. And thirdly, it lacks a clear ethical foundation. Finally, agonistic memory does not have a strong tradition: “Unlike cosmopolitanism with its grounding in the theory of the second modernity, agonism has a tough time identifying a definitive set of values, institutions, and practices,” note Kansteiner and Berger (2021, 226). When blended, agonism reveals multiple perspectives, shows different angles and unsettles fixed identities, while cosmopolitanism provides a human rights framework and an ethical foundation.

As an update of the previous article (Bull and Hansen 2016), Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021) present agonism as fluid, relational and firmly embedded in specific local contexts, highlighting the uniqueness of each setting. According to the UNREST team, cosmopolitanism has failed to constructively address the complexities of memory politics, and “agonistic memory hopes to unsettle a hegemonic and deeply problematic neoliberal status quo and give democratic socialism a stronger voice in contemporary political debates” (Kansteiner and Berger 2021, 204). The UNREST researchers aim for agonistic memory to empower left-wing, anti-neoliberal grassroots movements and cultural practitioners in addressing the past traumas that previous approaches have failed to resolve, believing that agonistic memory can raise awareness and help prevent future violence.

### ***1.5 The Conflicting and Coexisting Narratives of the Srebrenica Genocide and the Role of Art Beyond Them***

In this section, I aim to unravel the conflicting or simply co-existing narratives surrounding the Srebrenica genocide, using the concepts of critical pluralism, antagonist, cosmopolitan and agonistic memory modes as tools. Before doing so, it is necessary to acknowledge the sensitivity and complexity of this subject. So, the purpose of this section and dissertation is not to contest the established recognition of the genocide. The International Criminal

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Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) have proclaimed the Srebrenica massacre a genocide,<sup>29</sup> and this research proceeds with the understanding that this historical fact is widely accepted and recognised. Nevertheless, it is crucial to explore the diversity of the existing and often conflicting narratives in order to understand why the Srebrenica genocide remains the bone of contention in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region nearly three decades after it occurred.

After the Bosnian War, the international community imposed some top-down victim-centred reconciliatory cosmopolitan narratives on Srebrenica, which were often rejected by groups aligned with nationalist or revisionist narratives, developing extreme antagonist narratives such as genocide denial. While foreign-funded humanitarian agencies and NGOs tried to foster cosmopolitan memory, antagonist narratives dominated Bosnia's ethnopolitical groups (Ferrándiz and Hristova 2021). For this reason, Berger and Kansteiner (2021b) see potential in agonistic memory based on cosmopolitan values, stimulating memory debates between different groups rather than automatically relegating them to a dominant superficial narrative.

Indeed, Ferrándiz and Hristova (2021) observe some singular agonistic interventions in BiH promoted by grassroots, bottom-up initiatives operating within a framework of cosmopolitan memory. In the case of Srebrenica remembrance, they point out *Women in Black*, a feminist and anti-war organisation based in Belgrade that advocates for peace, human rights and justice, actively challenging the dominant denialist narrative promoted by Serbian political elites and annually organising silent vigils to remember the Srebrenica genocide. From my observations, the Post-Conflict Research Centre (PCRC) incorporates a mixed agonistic cosmopolitan approach even more effectively, encouraging dialogue between different groups instead of imposing a singular narrative. The PCRC advocates for a nuanced

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<sup>29</sup> I discuss the historical context in more detail in the following chapter (see Chapter 2).

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understanding of collective guilt and responsibility, promoting the idea that reconciliation should come through recognising wrongdoing on all sides while not denying or downplaying the severity of any particular atrocity, including Srebrenica. The Regional Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (RECOM) follows similar practices, inviting participants from different backgrounds to reflect on multiple narratives of victimhood and responsibility, challenging simplistic understandings of the past. So, by embracing the agonistic perspective, PCRC and RECOM try to bring conflicting perspectives and narratives to dialogue.



**Figure 1.5: The variety of the (most visible) existing narratives on the Srebrenica genocide, created by the author**

What are those conflicting narratives that the agonist approach aims to put in conversation?

Figure 1.5 illustrates the variety of the most visible conflicting or simply co-existing narratives on the Srebrenica genocide. The following explored list of narratives is not exhaustive and could constantly be enlarged and elaborated.

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First, victims and survivors should not be treated as a singular category as they are divided among themselves; some are represented by associations such as *Mothers of Srebrenica*, *Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa*, *Women of Srebrenica*, or the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, while others are not affiliated with any group. Each victim and survivor has their own story to represent. Second, the ICTY established a *judicial narrative*, which contrasts sharply with the domestic denialist narrative of Republika Srpska. The Srebrenica massacre was the only event in the conflict to receive a genocide classification by the ICTY. The importance of this *judicial narrative* is discussed in detail in the following chapter (see section 2.3). Third, there is the Dutch narrative, which has evolved over time. For decades, the Dutch government did not acknowledge its role in the genocide, but this changed with their official apology to the victims' relatives in 2022. Therefore, narratives can be fluid and change over time. Fourth, the Bosnian Serb and Serb communities are divided into those who align with nationalist narratives that deny the genocide and those who recognise the victims' suffering, including *Women in Black* from Belgrade, who advocate for justice and genocide recognition in Serbia. Fifth, religious discourse plays a significant role. While some factions of the Serbian Orthodox Church have aligned with Bosnian Serb and Serbian nationalist politicians in downplaying or denying the Srebrenica genocide, the Islamic community in BiH honours the victims as martyrs, fostering a sense of collective identity and resilience among Bosniaks, which ties into the broader political landscape. Sixth, the Bosnian diaspora remains diverse, with varying interpretations of the genocide. While some groups focus specifically on the Srebrenica genocide, others emphasise the broader context of the Bosnian War, advocating for recognition of a wider genocide against Bosniaks throughout the conflict, sometimes referred to as the *Bosnian genocide*.

Many of the identified narratives intertwine and partly merge. It is important to note that I am not suggesting that all narratives are equal and/or competing; some do not and just co-exist,

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as Molden (2016) noted in his research on mnemonic hegemony in collective memory. The aim is to highlight the evolving nature of historical interpretations and the influence of narratives on collective understandings of the past. As demonstrated, the Srebrenica genocide appears to be a highly multidimensional and complex event, saturated by different narratives that overlay an essential role in local societies instead of settling in history textbooks.<sup>30</sup> In fact, history classes are significant battlegrounds for conflicting narratives (see section 2.4).

As mentioned, PCRC and RECOM are invisible in Figure 5 because they work *beyond* the settled narratives and do not promote a singular version of events. Additionally, contemporary art often reveals a powerful agonistic potential to fluctuate beyond these rigid categories and serve as bridges between conflicting perspectives, as noted by UNREST researchers (Berger and Kansteiner 2021a). While most of the narratives mentioned above are exclusive (emerging from a particular group, ideology, or set of experiences), artworks typically suggest a more inclusive and cosmopolitan approach, often with an agonistic dimension. Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González (2021) indeed recognise the power of art in challenging hegemonic narratives. Nevertheless, they mainly highlight the importance of structured storytelling and see art as a secondary importance tool or medium:

Agonistic memory, therefore, offers the potential to remember the struggles of the past around hegemony by both deconstructing the dominant narrative(s) and reconstructing alternative socio-political paths, alliances and visions for the future. While artwork can play an important role in deconstructing the hegemonic memory regime and provoking strong emotional reactions among viewers, we would argue that narratives and storytelling are crucial in contributing effectively to the construction of a counter-hegemonic collective 'We'. (Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González 2021, 33)

I argue that by embracing the agonist dimension, contemporary cosmopolitan art might create its own narrative(s), which go beyond the discussed settled narratives and fluctuate independently. So, art itself can be a form of a narrative that challenges hegemonic

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 2 to know more about the current situation in BiH, the genocide denial and exceptionality of the Srebrenica genocide in more detail.



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narrative(s) and re-imagines alternative socio-political trajectories through its unique language. It is essential to acknowledge that art may sometimes reinforce established narratives; however, this dissertation focuses on artistic initiatives that stimulate social reflection and dialogue, similar to the agonistic games in museums (Angeli et al. 2021). In particular, I am interested in artworks that function as agonistic interventions, engaging with the complexities of memory, politics, and identity, facilitating cross-group dialogue by creating their own kind of narrative beyond traditional narrative frames. Chapter 3 further explores remembrance through art by focusing on the contributions of memory studies and the framework of memory activism and activism.

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In this dissertation, I do not strive to analyse and bring a new perspective to the Srebrenica genocide per se but rather explore *how* this event is interpreted in historiography and practises using concepts from history theory and memory studies. Chapter 2, for example, explores how the Srebrenica genocide is treated in existing historiography, using the post-narrativist framework, including Kanstener's insights and the triangle of modes of historical writing. A post-narrativist leader in historiography, Kuukkanen (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022a) finds Kansteiner's approach very progressive for history studies primarily because Kansteiner breaks the conventional dichotomy among historians viewing history strictly as a narrative or not by suggesting his pluralist (or trialist) triangle and elaborating on the hybridity and variety of historical writing.

Meanwhile, Chapters 6–8 focus on how artists and their audiences reimagine the Srebrenica genocide. Chapter 6 primarily investigates representations of the Srebrenica genocide using constructivist and narrativist frameworks. Although the post-narrativist history philosopher Kuukkanen (2015) rejects the 'representation', believing that historical text cannot represent

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the past, my research object is not the historical text, considered a traditional research object in history. This research explores (re)presentations of the Srebrenica genocide generated by art, a research object more common in memory studies than history. Moreover, creative works of art not only ‘represent’ the past event but themselves appear as original ‘presentations’ addressing the audience in their own way. Hence, it seems that artworks could simultaneously be both ‘presentations’ and ‘representations’ relating to both fields.

Kansteiner finds history theory and politics of memory fields closely related because they share theoretical concerns (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022a). However, he notes that it is still essential to understand the difference between history and memory.

Consequently, this qualitative explorative research goes beyond the historical methodology and theory, leaning towards memory studies, so it is interdisciplinary.

## **2 Understanding and Narrating Srebrenica in Contemporary Historiography**

This chapter builds on the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 1 to continue historiographical research. Firstly, it widely reconstructs what happened on 11 July 1995 in Srebrenica–Potočari, providing a comprehensive overview of the Srebrenica genocide and its historical context. Secondly, the chapter explores the main historiographical interpretations by applying Wulf Kansteiner’s model, the triangle of historical writing’s three primary modes (description, narration and argumentation). In addition, this section raises the question of distance in professional history writing. The third section unpacks the significance of the Srebrenica genocide as the only event adjudicated as genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), also known as the ‘judicial narrative.’ Also, it charts the legal perspective of the Srebrenica Genocide. The final section is devoted to the societal impact of ethnic cleansing and the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the denial of genocide. This chapter aims to provide information about the Srebrenica genocide, discuss its aftermath and the present-day situation in Srebrenica, BiH and the broader region, and present a literature review of existing scholarship, with particular attention to professional historical writing.

### ***2.1 Reconstructing the Srebrenica Genocide***

Before delving into the events in July 1995 around Srebrenica, the town in Eastern Bosnia, one needs to have a broader context and understand the previous events, i.e., the breakup of Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Wars (1991-2001), with a particular focus on the Bosnian War (1992-1995). First, the Yugoslav crisis and subsequent conflicts should be addressed as an international rather than a local phenomenon. It is essential to reject any orientalist approach

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that suggests a particular “Balkan mindset” was responsible for inflaming the war (Woodward 1995; Bianchini 1995). Secondly, one should refuse any primordial approach that views the conflict as an ancient and natural power that tears the region apart, as well as the idea of an “age-old antagonism” destroying the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Lampe 2000). Similarly, nationalist explanations for Yugoslavia’s collapse, such as the idea that it was an artificial, non-natural state invented by external powers or the friction between communism and anti-communism, should also be excluded (Bianchini 1995). To fully understand the Yugoslav crisis, it is necessary to consider the complete historical context, including economic, social and political preconditions.

One of the main factors contributing to the crisis was the socio-economic underdevelopment in socialist Yugoslavia (Bianchini 1995; Woodward 1995; Lampe 2000). Following the global tendencies (the 1973 energy crisis, the 1980 economic crisis, *perestroika*), Yugoslavia’s economic situation became burdensome in the 1980s. Enormous foreign debts,<sup>31</sup> the global economic recession, followed by austerity, massive unemployment, hyperinflation, and shock therapy, highly affected the country and its society, causing economic insecurities, instability and recession (Woodward 1995). Long-term causes and the barriers to Yugoslav integration (regional economic disparities, extensive backwardness of some regions, especially rural areas; socio-economic contrast between North and South; unequal access to education and opportunities in the job market; migration from the countryside to the cities and foreign countries; corruption, limited access to services, bribes and other limits of progress), immense reliance on Western aid and disbalance led to crisis

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<sup>31</sup> Woodward (1995) also blames foreign creditors and Western authorities drowning Yugoslavia in foreign debts and leading to “political suicide” when asking the Yugoslav government to reduce their power. According to her, Yugoslav wars were inseparable from the more widespread phenomenon of political disintegration and international economic conditions of the 1980s. Thus, Woodward criticised the international community for failing to prevent violent conflicts and understanding their grounds.

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and discontent among the population (Woodward 1995; Lampe 2000). Finally, the collapse of the Berlin Wall ushered in a new world order. Therefore, transforming from a socialist society to a market economy and democracy set the stage for the conflict (Woodward 1995, 15).

In addition to economic challenges, Yugoslavia also faced crises within the communist system, including problems of representation, radical changes in social structure, and failure to re-organise power structures (Bianchini 1995). Despite the 1968-1972 crisis, aspirations to improve and democratise power structures, and the 1974 Constitution, the regime could not pursue genuine democratisation because of its dictatorial nature. Therefore, representation was only limited to professions and authorised political organisations (such as parties and labour unions) rather than individuals/citizens. This crack in representation was later exploited by nationalist politicians, leading to a shift towards ethnic-based representation instead of citizenship, which ultimately estranged minorities (Bianchini 1995). Additionally, politicians have gradually sowed fear and distrust among people of different ethnic groups. Media has become a powerful tool for inciting manipulation and propaganda (Thompson 1999). The exploitation of nationalistic narratives of difference and separate historical memories during economically challenging times has raised cultural and territorial boundaries, increasing tensions within society (Bianchini 1995; Lampe 2000). The demobilisation of socio-economic grievances split the multinational community and destroyed existing relationships and trust between its members (Gagnon 2004). However, ethnic hatred became the outcome of the emerging conflict rather than the reason.

Refusal to accept the difference ended Yugoslavia (Bianchini 1995). “The problem was not ethnic conflict but the collapse and rejection of an overreaching legal authority and of a capacity to tolerate and manage differences” (Woodward 1995, 380). Minimizing the

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Yugoslav wars to ethnic conflict became one of the greatest mistakes in interpreting the crisis in Western scholarship (Woodward 1995). Another mistake was a belief that Tito's charisma was the central pillar that kept Yugoslavia alive as an "artificial" country (Woodward 1995, 21–46). Yugoslavia had a unique role and ability to play between the superpowers during the Cold War; it also kept a constitutional order and individual security provided by self-government. "Complex balancing act at the international level and an extensive system of rights and overlapping sovereignties" used to be the key to success for Yugoslavia according to Woodward (1995, 21–22). Increasing imbalances such as fractured communist leadership, struggles of modernizing the economic structure, extensive unemployment, disparities in living standards, and ingrained corruption eventually tore the country down (Lampe 2000).

Economic polarisation, which resulted in social polarisation, allowed nationalist politicians to gain momentum (Woodward 1995, 73). The first politician to play a nationalist card, violating the established Yugoslav order, was Slobodan Milošević, President of the League of Communists of Serbia then. In April 1987, Milošević promised to protect unrepresented Kosovo's Serbs against Kosovo's Albanians. After his performance in Kosovo Polje, the media quickly created a legend of an emerging politician fighting for the Serb's rights and well-being. Under the guise of modernisation and democratisation, Milošević initiated the so-called anti-bureaucratic revolution, which inflamed nationalist passions. Soon, Milošević mobilised Serbs in Vojvodina (another autonomous province) and Montenegro, taking half of Yugoslavia into his hands and seeking more control (Silber and Little 1997). Through the Serb minorities, Milošević aimed to weaken other republics and their leaders, gaining more power (Donia 2014, 73). In response to Milošević's mobilisation, the second biggest Republic of Croatia elected President Franjo Tuđman in their first democratic multiparty elections in April 1990. Following events, in July 1990, Bosnian Serbs formed the Serb Democratic Party (SDS: *Srpska demokratska stranka*), led by rising politician Radovan

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Karadžić. In November 1990, three nationalist parties representing the interests of Bosnian Serbs (SDS), Bosniaks (SDA: *Stranka demokratske akcije*/Party of Democratic Action, led by Alija Izetbegović) and Bosnian Croats (HDZ: *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*/the Croatian Democratic Union) won the elections, defeating social democratic and the Reformist parties, in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Donia 2014). Soon after, Milošević was elected as President of Serbia. Moreover, Milošević finally mobilised Serbs in other republics than Serbia, which had not worked during the anti-bureaucratic revolution (Donia 2014). These 1990 elections facilitated the spread of nationalism and division throughout Yugoslavia (Donia 2014).

Raif Dizdarević, the former president of Yugoslavia's federal presidency, identified Yugoslavian resurgent nationalists as either 'separatists' (Kosovo Albanians, nationalist Slovenes, Croats and Macedonians) or 'hegemonists' (Serb nationalists in Serbia, Montenegro, BiH, Croatia, and Macedonia) (Donia 2014).<sup>32</sup> Paradoxically, the two forms of nationalism walked hand in hand. Separatists provoked the hegemonists to demand greater centralisation of Yugoslavia. In contrast, the hegemonists contested the moves of individual republics towards greater autonomy, fueling separatist fears of decentralisation. "Although all national movements posed a danger to socialist Yugoslavia, the greatest imminent threat to stability in BiH came from the Serb nationalists in the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro and the president of Serbia's League of Communists, Slobodan Milošević" (Donia 2014, 43). Milošević supported and sponsored Serb nationalists in Croatia and BiH, and that later escalated into the war. In August 1990, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA),<sup>33</sup> by Milošević

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<sup>32</sup> Donia (2014) refers to Raif Dizdarević's (1999) book *Od smrti Tita do smrti Jugoslavije. Svjedočenja* (Sarajevo: Biblioteka Svjedok, 295).

<sup>33</sup> Besides JNA, Yugoslavia also contained another component of armed forces, known as Territorial Defence. However, as Donia (2014, 92-93) noted "on May 14, 1990, the JNA ordered Territorial Defence weapons and ammunition transferred to the JNA's own armories to be secured under lock and key [...]. But after the elections of November 1990, the Territorial Defence units and police forces came under the control of the nationalist

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command, started distributing weapons to Serb civilians in Knin (Croatia), densely populated by Serbs (Donia 2014). In December 1990, SDS Croatian Serbs formed the Serb Autonomous Region of Krajina (SAO Krajina), bordering BiH. Soon after, in April 1991, Bosnian Serbs formed the Community of Municipalities of Bosnian Krajina (renamed the Autonomous Region of Krajina (ARK) in September). In June, these two newly formed regional units established a cross-boundary association.

As Milošević expanded his influence and power in Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia decided to secede rather than oppose and contradict Milošević within Yugoslavia. On 25 June 1991, following the plebiscites for independence, Croatia and Slovenia drafted declarations of sovereignty. Like the domino effect, these secessions accelerated processes throughout Yugoslavia. With the JNA on his side, Milošević aimed to preserve Yugoslavia. Therefore, JNA launched an attack on secessionist Slovenia. Due to its ten-day duration, this conflict became known as the Slovenian War of Independence or The Ten-Day War. Slovenia was ‘fortunate’ not to have a significant Serb (or any other) national minority. Therefore, it was pointless for Milošević to seek control there. This first Yugoslav war did not result in many casualties; however, Slovenia’s secession became a striking actor in the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Woodward 1995). Croatia, hosting a significant part of the Serb population, faced a more challenging fate than Slovenia. Serbian hegemonists supported by JNA, Milošević and paramilitaries gradually expanded and soon controlled a significant part of Croatian territory. In order to establish occupied territories, Serbian forces burned villages and towns, systematically killed Croatian civilians and/or forced them to leave, committing ethnic cleansing. In response, Croatia began to rebuild its army and re-establish its order.

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political leaders who governed in each particular municipality.” By following Karadžić’s municipal strategy of establishing parallel Serbian institutions (including police) in municipalities inhabited by Serbs, Bosnian Serbs forces were quick to absorb most of the weapons from Territorial Defence warehouses (Donia 2014, 182).



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Only in ethnically diverse Bosnia and Herzegovina could the situation have worsened than in Croatia. SDS had an ambition for their sovereign and undivided state; thus, on 9 January 1992, the Bosnian Serb Assembly (BSA) proclaimed the Republika Srpska (RS). However, to firm their proclamation, SDS were waiting for a pretext. 28 February-1 March 1992, following Slovenia and Croatia, BiH held a referendum to succeed Yugoslavia. Most Bosniak and Bosnian Croat voters were in favour, while Bosnian Serbs boycotted the referendum, expressing their will to remain in Yugoslavia, dominated by Milošević. On 1 March 1992, BiH became an independent republic, which became a pretext for the Bosnian Serbs to assault. General Ratko Mladić soon managed to mobilise his forces in BiH. He ordered JNA soldiers of Bosnian Serb origin to join the Bosnian Serb army, which shortly became known as the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS: *Vojska Republike Srpske*). On 5 April 1992, overwhelmed by a sense of war and proud of their inter-ethnically mixed spirit, Sarajevans organised an anti-war rally. Peace activists rejected all uprising nationalism and attempts to divide the country (Donia 2014, 188). Nevertheless, the protest did not save Sarajevo. Bosnian Serb forces pursued the Sarajevo barricade campaign and accused the protesters of endangering Bosnian Serbs. The next day, the war erupted as the Serbian forces besieged a multi-ethnic city, starting the longest siege in modern history.<sup>34</sup> Aiming to split Sarajevo into two parts, Serbian and Bosniak, VRS was targeting Bosniak civilians, destroying buildings and infrastructure. On April 7, 1992, Republika Srpska declared its independence.

In 1992 summer, the second front opened as the Croatian Defence Council (HVO: *Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane*) attacked their former allies. Soon, HVO, assisted by paramilitaries, committed mass atrocities, burned Bosniak villages and established concentration camps. At the beginning of the war, Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats (sponsored by the Croatian

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<sup>34</sup> Sarajevo was besieged for 1,425 days, from 5 April 1992 to 29 February 1996.

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government) seemed to fight together against VRS. However, in March 1991, Milošević and Tuđman<sup>35</sup> secretly met on partitioning BiH (Donia 2014, 144). In turn, Bosnian Serb representatives Karadžić and Nikola Koljević met Mate Boba, representing Bosnian Croats, to discuss population exchanges and the division of different ethnic groups (Donia 2014, 144). On 6 May 1992, Karadžić and Boba signed the Graz Agreement, which confirmed their territorial aspirations in BiH, drawing the borders of RS and a Croatian independent entity, the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia. The Bosniak side, representing the largest community in Bosnia, was not invited to these negotiations. Fighting with the Bosnian Croatian and Serbian forces, supported by an external corps, at once challenged the ARBiH (*Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine*, Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the least armed of the armies it fought. The United States (US) has threatened to impose sanctions on Croatia, bringing Tuđman and Izetbegović to the negotiating table. The Washington Agreement, signed on March 18, 1994, ended at least one ongoing war.

Bosnian Serb nationalists intended to occupy as many territories in eastern Bosnia (bordering Serbia) as they could, no matter who lived there (Silber and Little 1997; Donia 2014). By May 1992, they had already controlled 70% of BiH's territory (Donia 2014, 195). The areas inhabited mainly by Serbs were smoothly taken, but many desired towns and villages had a majority Bosniak population. In those cases, VRS, assisted by JNA, paramilitaries, special police and territorial defence<sup>36</sup> units, and volunteers, ethnically cleansed those territories. In the first months of the war, Srebrenica, Žepa, and Goražde had become the major enclaves and refuge for thousands of fleeing Bosniak refugees, expelled from their homes. The VRS sieged those towns, creating challenging conditions for civilians to survive. Most individuals

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<sup>35</sup> It is no secret that Tuđman had ambitions to extend Croatia's border by linking this unit to its territory.

<sup>36</sup> In July 1991, Karadžić concluded an informal pact with the JNA (Donia 2014, 97). Having JNA on their side, SDS could expand their territories and pursue ethnic cleansing.

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desired to depart, and some evacuated, jumping into the United Nations (UN) convoys primarily appointed for the injured. Mladić enthusiastically supported the Bosniak mass evacuation by the UN as it perfectly lined up with an ethnic cleansing strategy. However, it was not a primary concern for the BiH government in Sarajevo. They needed a critical mass of suffering in the Srebrenica enclave to exploit the situation and press the international community. The BiH government forbade the UN to evacuate people as this ‘contradicted their military goals’ (Honig and Both 1996, 91–93) and instead sought UN protection of the enclave.

In the spring of 1993, Philippe Morillon, the UN Force Commander in BiH (1992-1993), visited Srebrenica. Under pressure from Srebrenica authorities (empowered by Sarajevo) and women and children (induced by local authorities), Morillon promised not to abandon Bosniaks and ensure their protection under the UN. The meaning of these statements was unclear, and the higher UN authorities were dissatisfied with Morillon’s speech and unwilling to take any action. Nevertheless, on 16 April 1993, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 819 to create the first *safe area* of Srebrenica. In two days, Canadian troops arrived to protect it. On 6 May 1993, the UN Security Council passed similar Resolution 824, proclaiming Sarajevo, Žepa, Goražde, Tuzla and Bihać as *safe areas* supervised by the UN to protect the civilian population. On 8 May 1993, General Sefer Halilović and General Mladić agreed to disarm Srebrenica and Žepa enclaves, transforming them into “demilitarised zones.” However, the agreement was not implemented as the UN did not compel the 28th Division to surrender their weapons (Donia 2014, 268), and VRS continued attacking and sieging the enclave. *Safe areas* appeared to have been established for political purposes rather than for the benefit of civilians, who continued to face hush conditions. When rotation time came, no country was willing to replace Canadian troops and potentially engage in a conflict with the RS. The Netherlands was the only exception, as its civil society strongly supported

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the idea of peacekeeping. However, the challenge was that there was no peace to keep (Honig and Both 1996).

Srebrenica was a refuge, hosting thousands of Bosniak refugees from the surrounding villages for three years. Displaced persons and Srebrenica residents trapped in the enclave highly depended on VRS and their 'goodwill' to let humanitarian aid, food, medicine and other essential supplies in as all municipal services had quickly collapsed. Poor hygiene, malnutrition, inadequate medical care, and on-site waste dumping facilitated the spread of diseases, exacerbating the suffering and death toll (Donia 2014, 249). Regardless of the humanitarian crisis, the 28th Division of ARBiH and the BiH government remained in control of the town through three war years, except for a few days in April 1992. Srebrenica became a rare case in which the Yugoslav territorial defence system was successfully absorbed by ARBiH (and not, as in most cases, by VRS) (Honig and Both 1996, 78). As a result, Srebrenica has become a symbol of Bosnian resistance. Simultaneously, from May 1992 to January 1993, Bosniak fighters led by Naser Orić actively organised attacks against the Bosnian Serbs. Primarily, they were searching for food that was unavailable in the enclave. Unfortunately, these attacks were not without atrocities, as Bosniak forces burned and executed entire Serb villages (Honig and Both 1996, 79). Later, these attacks served as a 'sophisticated pretext' for Karadžić, Mladić, VRS and paramilitaries to seek revenge and carry out the genocide in July 1995, wiping out the Bosniak population and bringing Srebrenica municipality under RS control.

In May 1995, Karadžić encountered increasing pressure from the international community and the Bosniak–Croat Alliance. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) has intensified airstrikes, attacking strategic targets of VRS; the US and the EU (European Union) pushed for peace agreements, and Serbia's military support highly decreased as Milošević (rather

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Karadžić) was involved in bailing peace negotiations. As the RS's indivisibility faced an existential threat, Karadžić prepared to establish a clear and permanent presence in Eastern Bosnia by exercising a "harassment and humiliation" strategy against UNPROFOR (UN Protection Force) (Donia 2014, 256) and abolishing enclaves. Under Directive No. 7, Karadžić commanded VRS to "create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Žepa" (Donia 2014, 258) and to seize the territories once UNPROFOR leaves. Following Directive No. 7, Mladić released almost an identical Directive No. 7/1 for the Drina Corps to establish "total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life" in Srebrenica and Žepa (Donia 2014, 258). In July 1995, Karadžić launched an attack on Srebrenica, ordering VRS to take the enclave "with a methodical approach to carrying out mass atrocities" (Donia 2014, 266).

On July 6, 1995, VRS began a carefully planned attack "with heavy shelling and probing actions on the outer perimeter of the enclaves" (Donia 2014, 268). Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans (the Dutchbat Commander) did not take these attacks seriously, as the enclave was frequently shelled. However, on 8 July, the VRS started to take Dutch UN observation posts, raising concerns. Tensions between the Dutch and local Bosniak fighters also rose as the Dutch refused to fight on the Bosniak side and aimed to remain neutral. On 9 July, Bosniak refugees were fleeing to the northern part of the enclave, as the southern part was captured. On 10 and 11 July, the Dutchbat requested air support from NATO several times, but it was not provided due to disagreements, miscommunication and misunderstandings among UN authorities (Honig and Both 1996). On the night between 10 and 11 July, the Bosnian resistance demised as the 28th Division and other local fighters started to withdraw. The next day, on 11 July, Srebrenica fell, and around 25,000 (ICTY 2001) people sought refuge at a Dutch base in Potočari, a "single remaining UNPROFOR-controlled installation" (Donia 2014, 268). Soon, the UN base (a former battery factory) was densely packed with

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5,000 refugees. The remaining 20,000 sought refuge at nearby factories and fields. Everyone, including the Dutchbat, became VRS hostages. When night came, 10,000-15,000 (ICTY 2001) other Bosniak men related to the ARBiH and the 28th Division (but also civilians) formed a column to avoid the mines and escape Srebrenica. Their destination was the ARBiH-held territory of Tuzla, which was around 100 km away, as the column needed to walk through the forests and mountains across enemy lines.<sup>37</sup> Thousands of escapees were captured, transported and killed by VRS and paramilitary forces on their way to Tuzla. As a result, this trail was called “The Death March.”

The next day, 12 July, mass deportations began under the orders of Mladić. Women and children were separated from men and then deported on different buses. The VRS assumed that Bosniak men would be screened for involvement in war crimes against Serbs and then would be released. In reality, they were all supposed to be killed. Intimidated Dutchbat not only provided the fuel for deportations from Potočari to Kladanj (border of RS) but also assisted in separating families and boarding buses. The Dutch government ordered Karremans to avoid any Dutch casualties, so the lives of 429 (ICTY 2001) Dutch soldiers and staff (Donia 2014, 267) were preferred to those of 25,000 Bosniaks. The deportations were suspended overnight, but the VRS raped women and executed selected men at the base (Rohde 2012). On 13 July, the deportations continued, and at 7 p.m., all refugees from the UN base were deported.

Over the following days, the VRS and paramilitaries carried out mass executions of Bosniak men. Refugees from the UN base or those captured in the forest were taken to warehouses, unused factories and farm buildings, where they were shot with automatic rifles or killed with

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<sup>37</sup> “Has he crossed over?” became the most frequently asked question at the Dubrava airbase near Tuzla in July 1995, where mothers, grandmothers, and sisters waited for their loved ones. Those who “crossed over” managed to survive the genocide.

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grenades (Donia 2014, 270). Bosnian Serb forces were quick to hide the evidence and bury the victims in mass graves. Fearful of being caught, they often reburied the bodies in the secondary mass graves (Rohde 2012). Probably no one will ever know precisely how many people were killed, but it should be around 8,000,<sup>38</sup> of whom 7,017 have been identified (International Commission on Missing Persons 2023). The Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial plaque proclaims 8,372 victims. However, the exact number of victims is unknown due to the ongoing process of exhumation and identification of bodies. By 11 July 2023, 6,640 bodies had been buried at Potočari and other sites (International Commission on Missing Persons 2023). Only 3,000 Bosniaks survived the “The Death March,” and only a few men miraculously survived the executions carried out after leaving the UN base by bus (Rohde 2012). Around 20,000 people were expelled (UN News 2023).

How could this all have happened? Scholars give many reasons, but here is the synthesis. First of all, it is evident that the Bosnian Serb structures, VRS and paramilitaries were responsible for the massacres. Recently, court rulings have finally proved Serbia’s direct involvement in the crimes in BiH.<sup>39</sup> Also, the international community has failed to prevent genocide. The UN did not demonstrate effective leadership and suffered from poor communication among its members, resulting in slow responses and reactions. Lack of comprehension and failure to listen and follow the events did not improve the situation. So, the UN’s ineffectiveness, slow response, indifference, and failure to demonstrate power allowed the Bosnian Serbs to act and commit genocide. Finally, none of the UN members were willing to risk the lives of their soldiers and/or enter the potential conflict with Bosnian

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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that the numerical estimate is also part of the discursive disputes over the interpretation of the Srebrenica event. The creators of their ethno-political narratives tend to inflate the figures (to emphasise the scale of the crime), while the creators of the adversarial/defensive narrative seek to reduce the number and thus the significance of the crime. This will be discussed in the last section of this chapter that concerns the genocide denial.

<sup>39</sup> The following section explores this aspect.

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Serbs to save the Bosniaks, including the Dutch. The Dutchbat holds responsibility for directly handing over the Bosniaks to the Bosnian Serbs. At the same time, Dutchbat was not adequately equipped to resist Bosnian Serbian attacks and eventually became their hostage. The lack of soldiers, fuel, and military equipment made them unable to defend themselves. Lastly, it seems that Sarajevo's BiH government sacrificed Srebrenica in 1992. They did not bother sending forces to liberate Srebrenica as they focused primarily on central Bosnia; Srebrenica seemed too far and irrelevant. In addition, the central BiH government prevented the evacuation of civilians and used the suffering of civilians as a tool for pressure and raising pity. Some local fighters, such as Naser Orić (also a professional soldier), took advantage of the situation to become richer and famous, reselling the goods to starving and deprived populations under the siege. And then the times got tough; they fled. After a few years of compliance, the local fighters were to withdraw the first. However, it should be noted that their stockpiles of weapons have been decreasing, whereas the UN has partially disarmed thousands of men. In the end, the civilians and disarmed/unarmed fighters have paid the highest price for all this: They paid with their lives.

### ***2.2 Navigating Srebrenica's Historiography: Analysis of Main Interpretations***

Before diving into historiography (professional history writing), it should be mentioned that journalists were the first to report and inform the world about the violence that occurred in Srebrenica. Some later released entire books (Sudetic 1998; Rohde 2012) covering and widely explaining the events and their background. By using the Dutch battalion documents, Dutch researchers (Honig and Both 1996) contributed to explaining the mechanisms that enabled Bosnian Serb forces to pursue genocide. Over time, survivors' literature (Suljagić 2005, 2017; Petrila, Hasanović, and Suljagić 2021) also appeared, becoming essential sources



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of witnessing the genocide. Researchers from various disciplines have taken a direct or indirect<sup>40</sup> interest in the Srebrenica genocide. Therefore, studies on Srebrenica include the works from the human rights field (Peress and Stover 1998; Stover 2007), oral history (Leydesdorff 2011), anthropology (Wagner 2008; Halilovich 2015), legal studies (Nettelfield 2013; Bećirević 2014), history (Donia 2014), psychology and trauma memory studies (Jeftić 2020) as well as interdisciplinary studies (Nerzuk 2005; Bougarel et al. 2012; Nettelfield and Wagner 2013). In addition to more extensive book-length studies, one may mention a wide range of articles and book chapters from such (interdisciplinary) fields as public history (DiCaprio 2009), public memory (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020), legal history (Naimark 2009), political science (Mihajlović Trbovc and Petrović 2017; Gregulska 2018; Strupinskienė 2023); forensic archaeology combined with memory studies (Cyr 2014), literature (Heynders 2014), genocide and human rights studies (Southwick 2005; Karčić 2015; Subotić 2022), memory politics (Wagner 2010; Rijdsdijk 2014; Duijzings 2016; Mehler 2017; van den Berg and Hoondert 2020), folklore studies (Mencej 2021), diaspora studies (Karabegović 2014, 2019), gender studies combined with oral history (Leydesdorff 2007, 2009), memory studies (Jacobs 2017), memory/political activism (Gavrankapetanović-Redžić 2019, 2023), digital remembrance (Jaugaitė 2024a). In fact, these works resist simple categorisation. As Karamehić-Oates (2023) noted, interdisciplinarity appears as a standard feature rather than an exception in studies on BiH. In addition, the scholarship on Srebrenica is transnational and mainly produced in English, one of the shared global languages accessible to many. While Western scholars dominated this scholarship, new voices from BiH, the Bosnian diaspora, other Southeastern European countries, and non-Western regions such as the Baltics (like mine (Jaugaitė 2024a) or Lina Strupinskienė's (2023) started to emerge recently. This new

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<sup>40</sup> By indirect I mean that they might be interested in other objects related to or emerging from Srebrenica genocide. For example, this dissertation also does not focus on the Srebrenica genocide itself, but rather on the artistic initiatives that commemorate it.

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tendency promises the inclusion of diverse perspectives and a more balanced approach to Srebrenica scholarship in the future.

The Srebrenica genocide took place almost 30 years ago. Is this a sufficient time distance for historians to study what happened in July 1995 in Srebrenica and its surroundings? Or is it ‘too early to say’<sup>41</sup> anything? For example, the earliest comprehensive professional historical research about the Holocaust was published in 1961, 16 years after the events. Raul Hilberg’s masterwork *The Destruction of European Jews* was supplemented with new information and re-published in 1985 and 2003 (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b). The other most critical historiographical positions, according to Holocaust scholar Wulf Kasteiner (Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022b), emerged in the 2000s and 2010s: Christopher Browning’s *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2004) (59 years after the Holocaust), Saul Friedländer’s *The Years of Extermination* (2007) (62 years after), and Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlines* (2010) (65 years after). Three studies written by professionally trained historians stand out when examining the Srebrenica historiography. Two works of *instant history* (Lampe 2000) by Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both (1997) and David S. Rohde (1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 2012), and a work of Robert J. Donia (2014) nurtured over a more extended period. This section explores these works of history by employing Wulf Kansteiner’s model of three primary historical writing modes.

The very first work of history regarding the Srebrenica genocide appeared in 1996 (the 1<sup>st</sup> edition in the United Kingdom (UK) under the title of *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*. In 1997, it was published in the US. The same year, it was released in BiH as *Srebrenica*:

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<sup>41</sup> “Too early to say,” was the famous Chinese diplomat Zhou Enlai’s answer in the 1970s to a question about the impact of the French Revolution (1789). Enlai most probably referred to the student revolt in France (1968) and not to 1789. Nevertheless, his “words fit so neatly into the perception of Chinese statesmen taking the long view that they have assumed a life of their own” (Fenby 2017). I thank Stefano Bianchini for mentioning me this phrase during one of our conversations about history.

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*Hronika Ratnog Zločina*. In 1999, it received its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in the UK. One cannot help noticing that the book was written near the events it describes and lacks distance.

Nevertheless, its broad understanding of local and international developments between 1992 and 1995 surprises. Authors Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both are experts on BiH, and both happened to be trained as historians.<sup>42</sup> While Honig was involved in security and war studies, Both was interested in foreign affairs. First of all, Both assisted Lord Owen<sup>43</sup> in conducting research for his memoirs (in 1994-1995), published as *Balkan Odyssey* in 1995 (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). This experience of working with Owen gave Both privileged access to documents and insights that are typically unavailable to most historians, as well as the opportunity to directly engage with the British diplomat, who played a crucial role in the peace negotiations and international responses to the Bosnian conflict. Secondly, Both worked on his PhD dissertation on Dutch foreign policy and the Yugoslav crisis, which later became a monograph (Both 2000).

In their study, Honig and Both (1996) rely on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the Dutch battalion reports, testimonies, internal communications, and debriefings from Dutchbat soldiers stationed in Srebrenica. These documents contribute to understanding the Dutchbat's actions, responses, and failures during the Bosnian Serb assault. The authors also investigate the Dutch government records, including its communications with the UN and international bodies during the crisis, official government responses, political decisions, and post-war debriefings, parliamentary proceedings, which let the authors examine the Dutch role in the lead-up to and aftermath of the events in Srebrenica.

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<sup>42</sup> Honig holds a PhD in History, while Both holds a MA in History and MA in International Relations.

<sup>43</sup> "Lord David Owen is a British politician and diplomat, was European Union Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1995. He co-designed two peace plans for BiH—the "Vance-Owen Plan" and the "Owen-Stoltenberg Plan"—both of which collapsed in the course of 1993" (ICTY 2003).

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Meanwhile, the post-war Dutch investigation reports reveal the failures of Dutchbat and the Dutch leadership. Both and Honig use these reports and interviews with Dutch officials to critique the international handling of the situation. Also, they rely on the UN and ICTY documentation, which details the strategic decisions leading up to Srebrenica's fall. In addition, the book refers to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki publications, press releases, articles and expert interviews. Naturally, there are also many references to Owen's *Balkan Odyssey*. Finally, the authors own the BBC journalists for providing access to materials collected for their *War Crime* TV documentary. Despite its modest size, the book contains 139 footnotes, which validate the authors' efforts.

The descriptive mode characterises this study the most. Even though Honig's and Both's experience in BiH appears relatively limited compared to Rohde, who worked as a reporter, and Donia, who spent much time in the region, their texter accurately describes the geographical position of Srebrenica and the Dutch battalion's deployment (including bases, observation posts and blocking positions). He also describes in great detail the fall of Srebrenica—how precisely the attack on the enclave took place, what was the reaction of the Dutchbat (but also the reaction of civilians and the ARBiH), what means and weapons were used (and not used as well), how the massacre was planned and proceeded, who was involved. Also, the texter pays much attention to the nexus of local, regional and international politics. In addition to a thorough description, the texter provides in-depth and well-researched explanations based on collected sources.

*Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* also appears pretty argumentative. The texter seeks to prove that "Srebrenica's tragedy was that its fate was determined by the Serbs before the 'United Nations' resolved the dilemmas they had created themselves" (Honig and Both, xx), and that creating *safe areas* was a mistake which enabled Bosnian Serb authorities to plan

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and pursue the crime. The book demonstrates how Bosniak civilians were trapped in a no-win situation and condemned to death or deportation. As mentioned above, the texter is attentive to details and the development of events determined by political determination. In addition to presenting the decisions taken abroad (by the UN Security Council, NATO, the American, British, French, Russian, German, Dutch and Canadian governments) and the position of the Bosnian Serbs and the Serbian government, the study also reveals the often-overlooked attitude of the local Srebrenica authorities, local fighters, the 28th Division of ARBiH led by Orić, and the Bosnian government in Sarajevo. Honig's and Both's Dutch background and the choice to rely on Dutchbat and Dutch government documents may suggest the study's subjectivity. Indeed, sometimes it seems that Honig and Both try to justify the Dutchbat actions and minimise their responsibility for the genocide. However, most of the time, they perform as professional historians, seeking a more comprehensive picture and profound explanation of the events. Despite employing the notion of 'war crime' in their title, the authors foresightedly identified the genocidal nature back in 1996, which was officially acknowledged only in 2001.<sup>44</sup>

The narrative mode appears to be the least dominant in the book, but the book structure deserves some attention. Besides the introduction and 'post mortem', the book consists of three parts: 1) *The Fall of Srebrenica, July 1995*; 2) *Srebrenica, Safe Area*; 3) *Countdown to Massacre*. So, the narrative is divided chronologically. The book starts with the culmination: the attack on the enclave, the deportation of women and children and the deliberate massacre in July 1995. Here, all events are presented consistently (even in hours). After that, the texter goes back in time to explain the conditions in which the enclave was formed in 1993 and how it proceeded with the Dutch battalion. This second part also explains why Bosnian Serbs

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<sup>44</sup> ICTY (2001) convicted Bosnian Serb Army officer Radislav Krstić for aiding and abetting genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948).

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decided to attack the Srebrenica *safe area*. The third part explores the reasons why the international community (as well as the Bosnian government) did not prevent the massacres. Unlike the first part, the second and the third do not follow a rigorous chronological order but instead focus on developing arguments supported by careful descriptions. In conclusion, this book fulfils all the requirements of good historical research.

David S. Rohde's book, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* (1997), soon overtook Honig's and Both's study and became even more popular. No wonder *Endgame* was released for the second time in 2012.<sup>45</sup> Rohde is an American author who also worked as an investigative journalist in Eastern Bosnia. Rohde was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes in journalism. The first award was for covering the events in Srebrenica for the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1996. *Endgame* is a monograph born from the personal experience of a journalist in the region. Rohde's texter seems very honest about his bias and prejudices. I classify the book as this history work because the author has a history education (BA). Indeed, Rohde conducted extensive research in the region. Although *Endgame*'s essential sources seem to be eyewitness accounts and interviews with survivors, military personnel, and key figures involved in the events, Rohde also relies on various written sources. These sources include 1) internal UN documents and military reports, such as those from Dutch peacekeepers and UNPROFOR that provide insights into the UN's intelligence failures and their inability to protect the Srebrenica enclave; 2) the U.S. intelligence sources, including satellite images and aerial surveillance reports, which were vital in uncovering mass graves around Srebrenica; 3) the ICTY findings, mainly related to war crimes trials against General Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić 4) media outlets, international publications, as well as 5) public statements from government and military

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<sup>45</sup> This section explores the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which provides some time distance and new details. It would have been interesting to compare the two editions, but I could not get the access of the first edition, unfortunately.

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officials. The 337 profound and detailed footnotes accompany the book and confirm the authenticity and credibility of the study.

The book consists of a preface, nine chapters describing the events that happened on July 6-14 and 16, 1995, around Srebrenica, an ‘aftermath’ chapter, an epilogue and a postscript (added in 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). In the preface, the texter explains his background and establishes basic facts about the country, Srebrenica, the enclave and the established *safe area*. Later, he follows seven protagonists - three genocide survivors, two perpetrators, and two Dutch UN peacekeepers, and describes the situation from their perspectives. So, the texter coherently enables the voices of witnesses to reveal their thoughts about specific events and facts. In this way, the reader gets multiple perspectives and points of view. The footnotes provide comprehensive comments, explanations and evaluations of the protagonists’ positions. In addition, the texter pays attention to dispelling myths and well-established conspiracy theories. The book exposes names and personal data without any protection, which creates a sense of authenticity on the one hand. However, such an approach raises ethical questions about whether it may cause harm to the interviewees or damage their integrity.<sup>46</sup> Much of the information about the interviewees was exposed by the ICTY, but Rohde is responsible for treating the data he extracted by himself well. That is one of the problems and highest risks of dealing with recent history. ‘Aftermath’ and ‘Epilogue’ follow the main nine chapters, where the texter employs critical thinking to evaluate and reflect on the events he previously described and explored.

Description is the dominating mode in this publication. Rohde’s texter describes *The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica* and defines Srebrenica as *Europe’s Worst Massacre since World War*

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<sup>46</sup> Kapetanović (2023) remarked that many Western scholars who worked in BiH did not apply the same ethical standards as they would in their own countries.

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II. The texter pays much attention to describing the context and situation (political, economic, warfare and everyday life of the time). He is good at explaining nationalist tensions and regional politics. At the same time, the texter also wrote extensively on poor hygiene, class differences, deprivation (increased by black market activities), extensive violence and systematic rape. The narration is quite fractured as the texter constantly jumps from one protagonist to another. Although the action occurs mainly in Srebrenica and its surroundings, sometimes, the texter follows UN officials and (NATO) decision-makers from the US, Britain, France and the Netherlands based outside of BiH. Even if the content table indicates that the book's main body is divided into nine chapters—9 days (July 6-14 and 16, 1995) and exact hours, the texter 'travels in time' sometimes to explain the broader context (what happened before the fall of Srebrenica, for example). Chapters that focus on exact dates sometimes 'jump' in time, especially at the beginning of the book. As a result, some stories and their angles intertwine and become less coherent. Nevertheless, the texter remains a compelling narrator. Throughout the story, he masterly maintains the intrigue: even if one knows how the story will end, the texter engages the reader, captures attention and gradually raises tension. The description of all the details and conditions only amplifies this effect of emerging images.

Argumentation mode is also present in this study. Rohde was one of the first journalists to reveal what happened in Srebrenica in the press, and *Endgame* soon became the crowning achievement of his work. The author argues mainly about the international community's responsibility, which was a more robust argument when the book was released in 1997. The chosen title of *Endgame* Strategy refers to the American and the UN's ambition to finalise the prolonged Bosnian war and the Bosnian Serbs' objective to maintain and consolidate the *status quo*. Now (and in 2012, when the second edition appeared), the argument regarding the responsibility of the international community seems to go without saying, so one can



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conclude that *Endgame* contributed to the general understanding of the fall of Srebrenica, followed by massacres and burial efforts to hide the crimes, immediately after it happened. In addition, the texter also draws on the local and central (i.e., BiH government led by Alija Izetbegović) political background, which is often neglected. Regional politics are also well explained. However, overall, argumentation is the least dominating mode in *Endgame*. On the one hand, the title *Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II*<sup>47</sup> indicates that the texter neglects to acknowledge the genocidal nature of the crime and mostly prefers the notion of the 'massacre.' On the other hand, the ICTY officially classified it as a genocide only in 2001, while the first edition came in 1997. The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2012), though, is also titled 'massacre', and the notion of 'genocide' appears mainly when the texter refers to the ICTY. Rohde's texter sees *Endgame* only as the beginning of the investigation of Srebrenica events rather than a final version. However, compared to the previously released *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, Rohde's *Endgame* fails to explain the Western failure to protect civilians comprehensively (Karel 1997). Although *Endgame* may seem more engaging to the general public, Honig and Both have done a more solid historical analysis.

The third important work of history to explore is *Radovan Karadžić: Architect of the Bosnian Genocide* (2014) by Robert J. Donia. The author is an American historian of the modern Balkans, specialising in Bosnia's nineteenth and twentieth centuries history. Donia produced or edited books and articles about Bosnia and the region. As a historical expert, Donia testified at the ICTY, including the trials of Milošević and Karadžić. This unique experience and access to the original documents collected by ICTY has enabled Donia to write Karadžić's biography. Also, as an expert witness, Donia was privileged to become familiar

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<sup>47</sup> It is important to note that the *Europe's Worst Massacre since World War II* could also be interpreted as a narrative. Rohde was probably the first to popularise this statement, which continues to travel widely from academic papers and books to artistic initiatives.

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with the documents under seal. However, in his book, due to ICTY restrictions, he cites only public documentation, including the ICTY indictments, witness testimonies, judgments, and other official documents. Even though Donia does not directly use non-public materials, his insider's experience and knowledge probably inevitably shape his approach. Another critical resource for Donia became the Bosnian Serb Assembly (BSA) minutes from 1991 to 2006. Submitted as evidence in Karadžić's trial, the minutes allow Donia to analyse the Bosnian Serb leadership's internal political debates and decisions. In addition, Donia relies on hundreds of transcribed telephone conversations recorded and transcribed by BiH state security services starting in May 1991. These transcripts authenticate the intentions and strategies of Bosnian Serb leaders. Donia also examines internal documents of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS, the leading Serb nationalist party in BiH) that again provide insights into the political and military strategies of the Bosnian Serb leadership. Probably the most exciting primary source is the 18-volume diary of General Ratko Mladić, discovered in 2010. Mladić's diary documented the military strategies and interactions between Karadžić and Mladić during the war and enabled Donia to know Karadžić personality (Donia 2014, 19-21). In addition to primary sources, Donia also includes a wide range of academic literature related to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian War. The number of footnotes (704 in total) indicates the quality of the study. The monograph includes a preface, an introduction, 16 chapters, many of which define and deal with Karadžić's features,<sup>48</sup> and a conclusion. Primarily, he did not plan to write a biography but rather to understand "[...] how monstrous acts of violence could have been committed in the Bosnian society [...]" (Donia 2014, xiii). Donia's texter aims to explore a tremendous "transition [...] from national indifference to

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<sup>48</sup> Sacrificial Founder, Naïve Nationalist, Milošević's Willing Disciple, Visionary Planner, Euroskeptic, Imperious Serb Unifier, Triumphant Conspirator, Strategic Multitasker. Callous Perpetrator, Duplicitous Diplomat, Architect of Genocide.

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avid proponent of the utopian nationalist dream” (Donia 2014, 7) that Karadžić and many others<sup>49</sup> went through in the 1990s.

Regarding the modes of historical writing, Karadžić’s biography should be placed somewhere in the triangle’s centre as it more or less equally embodies all the modes. Compared to other studies, Donia’s texter is much more argumentative. Delving into Karadžić’s personality, personal life and political career, Donia’s texter argues to debunk the myth about inherently evil criminals and focuses on how one gradually becomes a perpetrator. While Rohde’s texter seems to accept Karadžić’s statement that he did not fit in a multi-ethnic Sarajevo,<sup>50</sup> Donia’s texter argues that Karadžić’s biography did not lead him to become the architect of genocide: “From all the information I had acquired about Karadžić, it appeared that in the first decades of his life he had enjoyed good relations with Bosniaks, Croats, Jews, and others in BiH. Examining his life before he entered politics in 1990, I found no significant nationalist leanings in either his writings or his conduct” (Donia 2014, 6). According to Donia’s texter, only after metamorphosis in September 1991 did Karadžić develop the nationalist idea of a homogenous state without Bosniaks. Another essential argument developed in the book is that “democracy can facilitate and accelerate mass atrocities” (Donia 2014, 306). By analysing the case of Bosnian Serbs and the SDS party as their instrument of power, the texter argues that representative “democracy helped bring about mass murder and genocide, while those countries claiming to champion democracy did too little to prevent or halt those atrocities” (Donia 2014, 306). Lastly, the book title proposes one more argument for the *Bosnian genocide*. It looks controversial because the texter explicitly follows the decisions of

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<sup>49</sup> Including Donia’s ex-colleague Nikola Koljević from Sarajevo.

<sup>50</sup> “Karadžić, a psychologist who lived and practiced in Sarajevo, later said he felt as if he had never been accepted in the multiethnic city” (Rohde 2021, 345).

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the ICTY and applies the genocide term only to the Srebrenica case (Donia 2014, 18). *The Architect of the Srebrenica genocide* would better reveal this argument (Vujačić 2016).

The genre of biography may propose that the book narrates Karadžić's life from childhood and youth to adulthood. However, the texter does not focus on the whole life of Karadžić (as he finds it "unremarkable" (Donia 2014, 302) before entering politics) nor explores much of what happened during the trial. Emphasis goes on Karadžić's political and war career (1990-1996) and the road to mass atrocities, including the Srebrenica genocide. The narrative more or less follows the chronological order, sometimes including flashbacks from the past to illustrate the changes. The texter seeks to delve into Karadžić personality and his ability to adapt, suggesting a "careful narrative of the psychological transformation of an ordinary middleclass professional into an emotionally driven nationalist extremist and perpetrator of mass crimes in the context of war," as book reviewer Veljko Vujačić (2016, 283) well noted. By doing so, the texter seems to go beyond the territory of history towards social sciences. Sociologist Vujačić (2016, 283) finds this narrative "sociologically provocative" and "morally unsettling: there is a potential extremist in all of us." Well, the texter aimed to narrate a story of a promising middle-aged man who "turned himself into the architect of the worst atrocities in Europe since the Second World War by unequivocally embracing the twisted values of exclusive nationalism" (Donia 2014, 310). The book's moral is that Karadžić's life "stands as a stark reminder to every leader and every citizen, that however much we value our own nation, we must also value those of other nations and humanity as a whole" (Donia 2014, 310). It is revealing rather than unsettling.

Descriptive quality also dominates in the monograph. It investigates how Republika Srpska was born and developed under the leadership of Karadžić, an SDS leader (1990-1996), covering significant thematic issues related to the Bosnian Serb national movement and

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Karadžić's complicated relations with Milošević and Mladić. The Bosnian Serb nationalist drama is depicted and described from Karadžić biography perspective. The texter gives a detailed account of the events and provocations just before and during the war in which Karadžić was involved. Also, the book significantly emphasises the development of Karadžić's 'disappearance discourse' and 'visionary plan.' Some additional findings include a portrait of Milošević that differs from the one established as the "Butcher of the Balkans." Donia's texter describes him as less bloodthirsty and autocratic as well as less of a 'the die-hard promoter of Great Serbia' as expected (Donia 2014, 308) but rather "a restraining factor on Karadžić, even as he offered military support" (Vujačić 2016, 283). The book also includes a portrait of Mladić, but his role appears only of secondary importance in planning the ethnic cleansing. The title and sometimes the texter suggest Karadžić as an architect of the genocide. However, the text demonstrates that "there seemed to be no master plan, but rather a series of contextually based decisions that escalated over time and ultimately led to the tragedy of Srebrenica" (Vujačić 2016, 283).

Figure 2.1 portrays the central historiographical positions of the Srebrenica genocide in Kansteiner's triangle. The first works (Honig and Both 1996; Rohde 2012), which appeared immediately after the events, are primarily descriptive. However, Rohde (2012) also seeks to create an engaging narrative besides describing the events. Both works of Honig and Both (1996) and Rohde (2012) rely on eyewitness accounts; however, while Honig and Both (1996) use those testimonies to supplement material obtained from documents, Rohde (2012) leans on witnesses because he wants to bring the reader closer to their experiences. Donia (2014) developed a different kind of study, which more or less equally embodies all three modes. Notably, Karadžić's biography was released during his ongoing trial. This work has a

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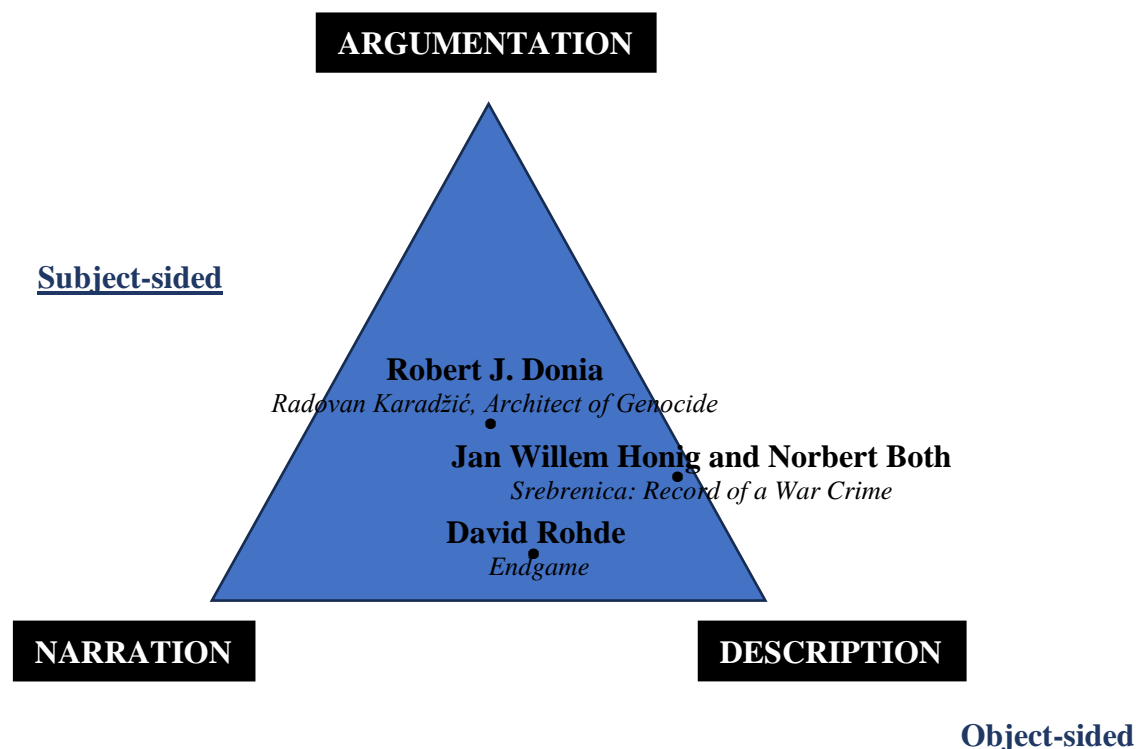
much longer distance<sup>51</sup> since the war's end than the two other publications, but it is still fresh, considering Karadžić's hunt and the trial. Nevertheless, as another historian, Petrović (2015), noted, "[i]t serves as a powerful reminder of the acceleration of historiography, which proves to be as contemporary as one can imagine, and not a bit less informing, and informed, for it."

It is interesting to consider what position these three works would occupy in the triangle if they were placed there at the time they were written rather than today. Probably a different one. I believe Honig's and Both's (1996) book and Rohde's first edition of 1997 would be considered much more argumentative pieces because they appeared immediately after the events and tried to argue and raise awareness about the importance of what happened in Srebrenica. Also, Donia's argumentation about Karadžić and the approach that everyone (potentially) might become a war criminal probably seemed more provoking in 2014 than now. Therefore, the positions within Kansteiner's triangle reflect the contemporary position based on the current state of historiography.

Regarding the correlation between the studies, *Endgame* and *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* appear as 'close cousins of the same time.' Although Rohde never cites Honig's and Both's work, Honig and Both (1996, 60) mention Rohde's role as a journalist and his early visit to the mass graves (Honig and Both 1996, 60). Donia cites *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime* but never mentions *Endgame* in his broad bibliography. That may confirm a higher historical value of Honig's and Both's work. All analysed works follow the ICJ and ICTY jurisprudence of the time. The first studies predicted the nature of genocide; however, they did not manipulate or challenge concepts of international law.

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<sup>51</sup> I appreciate the note made by my supervisor Paolo Capuzzo that "the distance is not only regulated by the emotional involvement in events, but also by the possibility of access to sources that changes over time."



**Figure 2.1: Main historiographical positions on Srebrenica genocide according to the modes of historical writing**, created by the author following the model of Wulf Kansteiner (2021; Centre for Philosophical Studies of History 2022)

### ***2.3 “Judicial Narrative” Beyond Verdict: Analysing the Unique Status of Srebrenica as Genocide in the ICTY Legal Landscape***

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) have not only pursued justice, but they have also created and shaped the Srebrenica narrative(s) in BiH and beyond.<sup>52</sup> As Gregulska (2018, 175) notes, “trials carried out at the ICTY produced much more than legal verdicts, they created historical accounts of the war, collected endless pages of documents and testimonies, strengthened survivors’ claims for justice and accountability and to a certain extent, shaped identities.” The ICJ also played an important role and contributed to institutional changes in Srebrenica (Gregulska 2018). This section will elaborate on established “judicial narrative”

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<sup>52</sup> I thank Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, who drew my attention to the importance of this narrative(s). Much was this chapter was inspired by her doctoral thesis (2014) and article (2020).

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and embraced “judicial narratives,” meaning the narrative imposed by ICJ and ICTY and the narratives received and co-/re-created below. At the outset, providing a concise history of the trials related to the events in Srebrenica in July 1995 is essential.

At the very beginning of the Bosnian war, in March 1993, a newly established country of Bosnia and Herzegovina appealed to the ICJ on the genocide committed by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later Serbia and Montenegro) against the Bosniaks. Since the ICJ only deals with disputes between countries, another platform was needed to prosecute individual war criminals. So, in May 1993, a special tribunal known as the ICTY was established to try the perpetrators of the Yugoslav wars (since 1991), including those involved in the Srebrenica massacre. On 16 November 1995, Karadžić and Mladić were charged with genocide in Srebrenica.<sup>53</sup> The first genocide conviction against Radislav Krstić, a Bosnian Serb Army officer, was proclaimed on 2 August 2001 (ICTY 2001). In 2004, the ICTY Appeals Chamber upheld the findings of the Trial Chamber and confirmed that what happened in Srebrenica was an act of genocide (ICTY 2004).

Still, the Krstić case (ICTY 2001, 2004) did not attain much media and public attention in BiH. Bosniak victims and civil society were most looking forward to the ICJ (2007) verdict on *Bosnia vs. Serbia and Montenegro* case, hoping that the ICJ would convict Serbia of widescale genocide in BiH. However, the ICJ confirmed that the genocide took place ‘only’ in Srebrenica in July 1995 (ICJ 2007), in accordance with the ICTY (ICTY 2001, 2004). This decision was disappointing for the other victims, who had suffered extensive violence in Eastern and Northern Bosnia, as well as in Srebrenica prior to July 1995 (Gregulska 2018). The ICJ ruled that Serbia had failed to prevent genocide in Srebrenica, but it did not find Serbia directly responsible for committing genocide through its own actions. Nevertheless,

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<sup>53</sup> Information taken from virtual timeline on official ICTY website: <https://www.icty.org/en>.



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Republika Srpska was found responsible for the genocide, including the RS government, structures, army, and police (ICJ 2007). This verdict was significant for many as it held the entire entity accountable rather than just individual perpetrators, which was the focus of the ICTY (Gregulska 2018).

The ICTY faced many structural challenges, such as low funding and low effort to prosecute “big fishes,” especially at the beginning of its career. The court did not avoid political influences and mistakes due to the judges’ bias and unfamiliarity with the region (Hoare 2011). It took 13 years to bring Karadžić to the ICTY (2008) and eight more years to investigate his crimes in BiH. In 2016, Karadžić was found guilty of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide in the area of Srebrenica in 1995; however, acquitted of the charge of genocide in other municipalities in BiH.<sup>54</sup> Mladić, another “big fish,” was caught in 2011. In 2017, Mladić was sentenced for the Srebrenica genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Altogether, 20 individuals were indicted for the July 1995 events in Srebrenica, of which 16 were convicted for the genocide. Here is what happened to the other four: Milošević, the most culpable individual according to many, died before the verdict. Serbian General Momčilo Perišić was acquitted. After this, it seemed that connecting Serbia to crimes in BiH would no longer be possible. However, in 2021, Serbian spies Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović were convicted for crimes against humanity committed in BiH. Then, in 2023, the IRMCT<sup>55</sup> additionally found them guilty of participating in a joint criminal enterprise. This verdict finally confirmed Serbia’s direct involvement in the Bosnian War, and the genocide concluded trials for the former Yugoslavia (Quell 2023).

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<sup>54</sup> Information taken from virtual timeline on official ICTY website: <https://www.icty.org/en>.

<sup>55</sup> In 21 December 2017, ICTY dissolved. In 22 December 2010, it was replaced by The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT or the *Mechanism*) to conclude the trial of two former Serbian spies Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović (Quell 2023).

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In addition to the goal of justice, the ICTY sought to bring about social change and restore peace in the region. Accordingly, the ICTY constructed an ‘authoritative legal narrative,’ which was supposed to establish ‘truth’ in divided post-Yugoslav societies, condemn war criminals and bring a sense of justice to victims. However, the dominant Bosniak and Serb narratives developed slightly differently than the ICTY suggested (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020, 567). Serbian media refrained from using the term ‘genocide’ in their reporting. Similarly, RS President and Government formally apologised for the crimes in Srebrenica but did not recognise it as genocide. Therefore, media framing and international support influenced competing Bosniak and Serb narratives (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020).

Mihajlović Trbovc (2020) observes a peculiar ping-pong game of attack and defence between nationalist politicians and suffering communities. Initially, the Serbian narrative framed the July events as a ‘revenge’ for Bosniak atrocities. Once Srebrenica commemorations gained prominence, the Serbian narrative shifted towards commemorating Serbian victims in Bratunac. Meanwhile, in the Bosniak narrative, Srebrenica became a powerful symbol of broader Bosniak victimisation, framing the genocide as indicative of Serbian motivations throughout the conflict. In other words, ICTY’s verdict to recognise the Srebrenica massacre as a genocide expanded to a broader interpretation of the Bosnian genocide (i.e., that Bosnian Serbs committed the genocide against Bosniaks throughout BiH). Bosniak officials exploited this misinterpretation to demand the annulment of RS as a ‘genocidal creation.’ By framing Srebrenica within the context of local fighting, the Serbian narrative avoided labelling the massacre as genocide and downplayed the genocidal nature of their overall war conduct. In turn, the Bosniak narrative’s link between the Srebrenica genocide and the legitimacy of RS further entrenched RS officials’ denial of the crime. Mihajlović Trbovc’s (2020) research shows that the ICTY had less influence on shaping public memory than anticipated. However, it did have some minor but significant effects:

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The findings of the judgments (and the investigative commission) impact public debates about the past, in the sense that they set the parameters for these debates (disabling complete denial that certain criminal events took place) and define critical notions or concepts (such as meaning of internationality of the conflict, ethnic cleansing, genocide) around which the public debates evolve. (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020, 569)

Although ICTY did not shift public narratives about the Srebrenica genocide significantly, it accelerated the circulation of the ‘Bosnian genocide’ narrative. It should be highlighted that the Srebrenica massacre was the only event in the Bosnian War adjudicated as genocide by the ICTY. To reach this conclusion, the ICTY applied the definition of genocide in Article 4(2) of the ICTY Statute,<sup>56</sup> derived directly from the Genocide Convention (1948):

[G]enocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, or religious group, as such:

- (a) killing members of the group;
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (ICTY 1993, 4(2))

The Trial Chamber identified the “Bosnian Muslim population of Srebrenica” (ICTY 2001, §558) as the genocide target group. The Appeals Chambers (ICTY 2004, fn 24) specified that this group consisted of two sub-groups or parts: Bosnian Muslims of Srebrenica (i.e., the local population of Srebrenica) and the Bosnian Muslims of Eastern Bosnia (i.e., refugees who fled from the surrounding areas to Srebrenica enclave). Here are the key legal findings<sup>57</sup> of the Trial Chamber, which found that the Srebrenica massacre constituted genocide:

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<sup>56</sup> Statute of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) adopted by Security Council resolution 827 (1993) of 25 May 1993 amended by Security Council resolutions 1166 (1998) of 13 May 1998, 1329 (2000) of 30 November 2000, 1411 (2002) of 17 May 2002 and 1431 (2002) of 14 August 2002.

<sup>57</sup> For a deeper understanding of the ICTY documentation, the International Crimes Law and Practice Volume I: Genocide commentary (Mettraux 2019, 153–222) and the Ph.D. thesis of Mihajlović Trbovc (2014) were used.

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- 1) There was a special intent “to eliminate all of the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica as a community” (ICTY 2001, §594). “The Bosnian Serb forces knew, by the time they decided to kill all of the military aged men, that the combination of those killings with the forcible transfer of the women, children and elderly would inevitably result in the physical disappearance of the Bosnian Muslim population at Srebrenica” (ICTY 2001, §595).
- 2) There was a special intent to destroy a specific community without the possibility of regeneration in Srebrenica: “By killing all the military aged men, the Bosnian Serb forces effectively destroyed the community of the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica as such and eliminated all likelihood that it could ever re-establish itself on that territory.” (ICTY 2001, §597).
- 3) Thus, the Trial Chamber concluded “that the intent to kill all the Bosnian Muslim men of military age in Srebrenica” constituted “an intent to destroy in part the Bosnian Muslim group within the meaning of Article 4 and therefore must be qualified as a genocide.” (ICTY 2001, §598).

Despite the ICTY judgement, there is a general tendency to misuse and abuse the legal concept of genocide. “It is especially popular among victims’ communities, because the genocide label is more likely to trigger recognition, empathy and even material benefits (compensation) for victims than any other crime,” notes Bachmann (2022, 49). Various authors—from journalists to academics—also tend to lump any violent crime under the label of genocide. In addition, many do not make a distinction between legal notions of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide and identify all as a Serb genocide against the Bosniaks. Therefore, reviewing the legal concepts related to the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) jurisdiction would be beneficial.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> I would like to express my special thanks to Kaja Kowalczevska and Karolina Wierczyńska for their

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The ICC has jurisdiction over four crimes: 1) war crimes, 2) genocide, 3) crimes against humanity, and 4) crimes of aggression (since 2018) (ICC 2024). It is crucial to understand that this categorisation has no clear hierarchy (Wierczynska 2016), and all four crimes are grave violations of international humanitarian law, yet ranking one crime ‘worse’ than another is challenging due to each offence’s complex and multifaceted nature as well as circumstances (Bachmann 2022, 51–52). Although genocide is a less common crime, it does not inherently have a lower status than other crimes. Genocide requires a specific intent to destroy a targeted group, while war crimes or crimes against humanity do not (Wierczynska 2016). Intentions, plans, and interactions are the most critical factors defining genocide’s gravity. Interestingly, the number of victims and cruelty are not the most significant criteria (Bachmann 2022, 66). Thus, qualitative criteria are more significant than quantitative ones. The misuse of the ‘genocide’ notion distorts its true meaning and leads to a trap. “If everything is genocide, then nothing is genocide: the concept then loses any distinct meaning and no longer enables us to distinguish between genocidal and non-genocidal actions” (Bachmann 2022, 51).

Since this study does not deal with international crimes and the particularities of the application of international law, I will be guided by the ICTY’s judgement that genocide occurred only in Srebrenica in July 1995. However, it is worth noting that there are researchers (Karčić and Newell 2023; Markusen and Mennecke 2017; Mujanović 2022) who tend to extend the concept of genocide to all of BiH and question the ICTY and ICJ decisions. One of the more exciting positions is that of the British historian Hoare (2011), who served as a research officer and war crimes investigator at the ICTY and witnessed as an

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comprehensive lectures (part of the International Summer School “Crime and Punishment: responsibility for violations of the law of war. Perspectives of international law and historiography” organised by Mieroszewski Centre in Poland). Thanks to them, I have gained a better understanding of international law.

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expert. Hoare begins by discussing the findings of the German courts, followed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which concluded that the genocide occurred in Northern and Eastern Bosnia in 1992. Then Hoare provides constructive critical insights into the ICJ's and ICTY's mechanisms and operations, pointing out their failure to adequately address the broader scope of genocide in BiH beyond the Srebrenica. Hoare explores the limitations of ICJ, paying attention to the unfavourable position of BiH during the genocide process of *Bosnia vs. Serbia and Montenegro*.<sup>59</sup> According to Hoare, international courts have been ineffective and have not achieved their intended justice goals.

A less successful attempt to argue about broader-scale genocide is a book by Bosnian legal scholar Edina Bećirević (2014). Bećirević argues that genocide took place from 1992 to 1995 in all of BiH and was part of a broader plan of Serbian politics. Moreover, the book gives the impression that the genocide took centuries to develop and that the Serbs had a long-standing animosity towards the Bosnians. For this reason, Kerenji (2016) finds it 'astonishingly ahistorical.' The strength of her book is the analysis of extensive violent campaigns and ethnic cleansing in seven municipalities of Eastern Bosnia (Zvornik, Vlasenica, Bratunac, Rogatica, Foča, Višegrad, and Srebrenica) in 1992. However, as previously stated, cruelty and violence are not relevant factors for 'diagnosing' genocide. Bećirević's arguments do not sufficiently challenge the decisions made by the ICJ and ICTY. The evaluation of the work suggests that it has a more journalistic rather than scholarly style. All in all, Bećirević's (2014) book is relevant but controversial.

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<sup>59</sup> "Bosnia's case against Serbia was a civil case, meaning that if Bosnia had won, Serbia would have been liable to pay damages to Bosnia. Nevertheless, Bosnia was required to prove genocide beyond all reasonable doubt, without having any means of obtaining confidential documents—no subpoena and no police force. So, on the one hand, the ICJ expected the Bosnian legal team to prove beyond all reasonable doubt that Serbia was guilty, as if this were a criminal case, but on the other hand, it refused to make Serbia hand over key items of evidence and forced Bosnia to rely on the evidence it had available to it—a policy that would be more appropriate to a civil case." (Hoare 2011, 89–90).

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The verdicts on genocide from the ICJ and ICTY indeed provided the survivors of Srebrenica with a significant moral tool for remembrance and the fight for justice, which other victim communities lacked (Gregulska 2018). At the same time, the intensive emphasis on the genocide has notably moulded the Bosniak historical discourse, compelling victims from other areas to assert their identification as genocide victims, notwithstanding the absence of a definitive judgement from ICTY (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 296). In my opinion, the issue is not that other crimes have not been acknowledged as genocide but rather that the general public perceives genocide to be a more severe crime than crimes against humanity and war crimes, which is unfair. Rather than applying the concept of genocide to everything, it is crucial to understand the meaning and horror of other legal concepts. This approach could ensure that all victims and survivors feel valued. Unfortunately, a hierarchy of victims (with the genocide victims at the centre) flourishes instead.<sup>60</sup>

The ICTY was supposed to reveal the ‘truth’ about the perpetrators and their crimes.

However, the fact that it has been interpreted has only reinforced the nationalist narratives of

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<sup>60</sup> The long sought recognition of genocide by survivors (*the guardians of memory*, as semiotician Valentina Pisanty (2020) might call them) gradually turns into a hegemonic force that controls a narrative where only the roles of victims and perpetrators are acknowledged (Perra 2021). It is important to note that the hegemonic narrative is mainly exploited not by the victims and survivors of Srebrenica, but by Bosniak ruling elites and nationalists. To challenge the victim-perpetrator binary, memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg (2019) suggested the category of *implicated subject*, which captures those who are neither direct victims nor perpetrators but are nonetheless entangled in structures of violence and historical responsibility. Therefore, the *implicated subject* highly complicates the established categories of victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and the just, aiming to grasp the role in between those boxes. Additionally, Rothberg explores how *implicated subjects*, often unintentionally, benefit from or are complicit in oppressive systems. Expanding on this reconsideration of memory, Rothberg’s (2009) concept of *multidirectional memory* resists competitive memory discourses and encourages reflection on what can be learned from the past and applied in different contexts, whether the Holocaust, other genocides, crimes against humanity, war crimes, colonial violence, or other forms of mass violence and historical injustices. It suggests that acknowledging one event can deepen understanding of another in a different context. Pisanty (2020) also critiques the artificially established cosmopolitan Holocaust imperative of ‘never again,’ arguing that it has been largely ineffective in preventing xenophobia and recurring hate crimes. Paradoxically, she argues that the Holocaust narrative is sometimes co-opted by the far right to justify hatred of other peoples and minorities. According to Pisanty (2020), the politics of remembrance should work by recognising the logic of criminal mechanisms rather than fixating on ‘extreme evil.’ A special thanks to my reviewer, Daniele Salerno, who made me even more aware of these issues and suggested the works of Pisanty and Rothberg.

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victimhood: ‘unjustly’ punished war criminals of their national group and the unrecognised suffering of particular victim communities. Although the media coverage was relatively objective, nationalist elites contributed to overall dissatisfaction with ICTY activities (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020). Due to ICTY and ICJ, Srebrenica was granted a unique status, which eased survivors’ path to justice and recognition. Unfortunately, other communities of victims who suffered extermination and extensive violence in BiH were not as ‘fortunate’ (Gregulska 2018). Although many Bosnians, including Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, express dissatisfaction with the decisions and work of international courts, research shows (Mihajlović Trbovc 2020; Mihajlović Trbovc and Petrović 2017; Nettelfield 2013; Gregulska 2018; Clark 2020) that these courts have contributed to a positive change in the region overall. Without them, the situation would have been worse.

### ***2.4 The Current Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Genocide Denial***

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) ended the Bosnian War, imposing a complex political and administrative structure of power-sharing among the country’s constitutive peoples, Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Political scientist Mujanović (2017, 15) calls Bosnia and Herzegovina a state of ‘fractured authoritarianism’: “It is a fractured state because of the pervasive sectarian tensions among the representatives of the country’s respective “constitutive peoples”; the Bosniak, Serb, and Croat political elites. However, it is also doubtlessly an authoritarian state because each of BiH’s territorial and political fragments is administered like a patrimonial fiefdom by these same elites.” The political and administrative divisions created by the DPA force citizens to belong to ethnically defined groups and prevent them from choosing a more inclusive Bosnian identity.



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Apart from politics, BiH citizens are segregated in other areas of life, such as education, media, social and cultural organisations, and informal economic networks. Children attend separate schools depending on their ethnic community (Bravi 2023) and learn from specially designed history textbooks for their ethnic group (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014; Jozelić 2020). The media landscape is also divided along ethnic lines, with separate television channels, newspapers, and radio stations catering to Bosniak, Croat, and Serb audiences. Many organisations also cater to specific ethnic communities, aiming to promote ethnic identities and traditions. This division prevents citizens of different groups from meeting each other and interacting, contributing to a lack of shared narratives and understanding. Ultimately, all these spheres end up in politics through deep-rooted clientelism and corruption (Brković 2017). In BiH, one-third of employed individuals work in the public sector, which the leading nationalist parties directly influence (Mujanović 2017). Such a situation creates conditions for a ‘culture of favours’ to thrive. The current nationalist sociopolitical and socio-economic climate, combined with high levels of unemployment, has led to a significant increase in emigration among young people, creating a new problem of rapid population decline (Kurtović 2021).

It is worth noting that that Bosnians form one of the largest diasporas in the world,<sup>61</sup> the result of a violent war, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Bosnian diaspora positively shapes the cultural, social, and economic landscape in their host countries and BiH (Karabegović 2014, 2019). As well as being BiH’s voice abroad, it contributes to the Bosnian economy through remittances, business initiatives and entrepreneurship (Oruč 2011a, 2011b; USAID 2023).<sup>62</sup> In addition, the diaspora actively contributes to social development by sponsoring community projects, donating to charitable organisations, and supporting social, cultural and educational

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<sup>61</sup> Considering the population size of BiH.

<sup>62</sup> Oruč (2011a; 2011b) also provides critical insights on incoming remittances, such as increasing inequality.

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initiatives. Most importantly, diaspora members advocate for reforms at the local and national levels, promoting democracy, human rights, and social justice (Gregulska 2018). Finally, cultural and educational programs initiated by the diaspora aim to reduce segregation and encourage dialogue and mutual understanding between ethnic groups. It should be noted that diaspora initiatives are not always welcomed in BiH. For example, Hasić's (2018) research shows that local Bosnian elites do not see the diaspora as sufficiently competent to deal with peacebuilding challenges. However, the Bosnian diaspora forms a significant part of Bosnian active civil society, liberated from imposed ethnic identities and aligned with the civil state.<sup>63</sup>

As mentioned above, the DPA divided the state organisation and many other spheres that derive from it, including memory and public memorialisation. Since the 1990s, the memory of Yugoslavia has been replaced by hegemonic narratives constructed by ethnopolitical elites. These narratives changed the shared memories of Yugoslavia(s), including the common struggle against fascism during the Second World War, and concentrated on a particular ethnic group and its suffering. Most importantly, these ethnopolitical narratives, which fuelled the war and divided the country, are still widely used and manipulated in politics today. They legitimise each elite's interpretation of the war and justify the measures taken to consolidate power and authority (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014). Mihajlović Trbovc (2014, 299) notes that "historical narratives function as ethnic markers—the promotion of certain historical interpretation implies the ethnicity of the promoter. Or vice-versa, belonging to a certain ethnicity implies the adoption of a certain historical narrative," and highlights that "rendering rejection of the narrative equal to self-excommunication from the national group." To ensure loyalty to an ethnic group, schools inculcate those master narratives from an early age. History textbook analysis shows that ethnopolitical history narratives "adopt the

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<sup>63</sup> I acknowledge that diaspora is not homogenous, but is made up of various groups with different points of view. However, it appears that in many respects, the diaspora has more freedom regarding these issues.

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defensive position of a victim under (symbolic or physical) attack, thus framing the war effort as necessary defence” (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 297). Therefore, they foster disparate and conflicting notions of responsibility for the war, making it less likely that young people will confront hegemonic narratives and acknowledge the crimes of their ethnic group (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 299). Finally, promoting the ‘only truth’ narrative excludes the possibility of other narratives, including those of other ethnic groups.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the narrative of victims and survivors from different ethnic groups is often considered illegitimate and incorrect.

Considering the dominant fractured narratives, it is unsurprising that the Srebrenica genocide remains a controversial topic in BiH and the surrounding region. On 10 November 2004, the RS government apologised to the families of Srebrenica (OSCE 2004). However, RS authorities did not acknowledge the crime as a genocide (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014) nor accepted full responsibility for it (Denti 2016). The apology issued by the RS government appeared to be more of a “regretful acknowledgement”<sup>65</sup> than a full apology. However, this apology was of great significance: It marked the first time Bosnian Serb officials acknowledged the scale of the crime and the involvement of Serbs and apologised for it (Denti 2016). On 31 March 2010, the Serbian parliament issued a declaration apologising for the ‘crime’ in Srebrenica (1995) “in the manner established by the ruling of the ICJ” (National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia 2010). As Denti (2016, 82) accurately notes, “[t]extually, the resolution does not explicitly refer to Srebrenica as genocide, but ambiguously condemns the crime in its definition by the ICJ—i.e. as genocide, though without explaining the ICJ’s evaluation—thus with an implicit recognition but without having to resort to the still unpalatable G-word.” Serbia’s apology was likely a pragmatic

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<sup>64</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, multi-perspective education could contribute to inclusion of different narratives and voices.

<sup>65</sup> Denti (2016) refers to a chapter by Lisa S. Villadsen (2013) under the title “The Regretful Acknowledgment: a Dignified End to a Disgraceful Story?,” in *Public Apology Between Ritual and Regret*, 229-248.

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move, as the country sought to become a candidate for EU membership (Dragović-Soso 2012). The third meaningful apology for “the crime committed in Srebrenica” came from the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, in April 2013 (Denti 2016). Nikolić’s apology was not without controversy, given that he was a former vice-president of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and a known genocide denier. In his apology, Nikolić avoided the word ‘genocide’ and used the word ‘crime.’ Despite the controversy, these public apologies are essential. They not only open the doors to the ongoing peacebuilding process but also contribute to positive change by neutralising the conflict potential of reactive memories, thus contributing to the reconciliation process (Denti 2016). On the other hand, recognising the truth is the central goal of transitional justice (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 295), and it has not been achieved in the Srebrenica case.

Although these apologies seemed to be a step in the right direction, the situation has deteriorated. The denial of genocide has persisted, only in different forms over time: first denying that it happened, then denying the extent, and now denying the nature of genocide (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 289). The annual reports<sup>66</sup> on genocide denial demonstrate that these public apologies were insufficient, as genocide denial remains prevalent in the region. The 2001 report, covering the period from May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, reveals that:

[G]enocide denial, including the glorification of war crimes and criminals, remains widespread in both Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and neighbouring countries. Over the course of the past year, quantitative analysis identified 234 instances of genocide denial in the regional public and media discourse. The vast majority of these instances occurred in Serbia (142), followed by BiH (60), and Montenegro (19). The three most common rhetorical tactics used in genocide denial remain disputing the number and identity of victims, conspiracy theories which challenge the rulings and integrity of international courts, and nationalist historical revisionism. (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021b, 4)

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<sup>66</sup> Since 2020, the *Srebrenica Memorial Centre* has released annual reports on the denial of the Srebrenica genocide, which have been captured in the public media space.

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Genocide denial dramatically increased in 2022 (from 1 May 2021 to 30 April 2022).

Srebrenica Memorial Centre (2022) has recorded 693 cases of denial in BiH and the region.

Interestingly, in the 2023 report (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2023), this figure dropped to 90. However, this does not necessarily indicate a radical change in genocide denial. The focus may have shifted to Kosovo, causing Srebrenica to appear less significant.

Furthermore, the recorded cases are not the sole indication of awareness regarding the Srebrenica genocide (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2023). Also, genocide denial can manifest in various ways and forms.

Some of the most prominent deniers<sup>67</sup> now are Bosnian Serb and Serbian political elites, as well as Serbian media tabloids. The most active among them is the RS president Milorad Dodik, who refers to the Srebrenica genocide as a ‘crime,’ places responsibility on individual perpetrators rather than the RS as a whole, and minimises its scale. Most importantly, controversial figures and genocide deniers remain in the public sector (e.g., media, education, science, culture, and politics). Some individuals who held positions in the Bosnian Serb political and military apparatus during the war still hold government positions at the state and entity levels (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021b). Milorad Dodik is probably the key example of such a reality. Despite the release of the Genocide Denial Law in 2021 and numerous lawsuits, no one has yet been punished<sup>68</sup> (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2023). Therefore, the Bosnian Serb authorities defend and patronise former political and military leaders.

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<sup>67</sup> In the 2022-2023 reports, Croatian President Zoran Milanović is also on the list of deniers, having refused to describe the events in Srebrenica in July 1995 as genocide.

<sup>68</sup> Applying the Criminal Code article against genocide denial is almost impossible. It must be proven that a person has directly incited violence or hatred against a group or its members, and there must be a demonstrable direct consequence (Simic 2024).

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Regarding the Srebrenica genocide, mourning and grief are not forbidden, but they may not be considered *deserved* (Butler 2003) and highly welcomed. For instance, the commemoration of the 26th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide was disrupted by loud and provocative music from the parallel celebration of Bosnian Serbs, known as the “liberation of Srebrenica” (Gadzo 2021). As previously discussed, the new generation of non-Bosniak origin does not learn about the genocide in school. Moreover, walls and fences are frequently adorned with murals and graffiti that glorify Mladić and VRS. Additionally, various campaigns that promote hatred and glorification thrive online. To observe online campaigns celebrating the Srebrenica genocide, one could easily search for the #NožŽicaSrebrenica or *Remove Kebab* meme (Ristić 2023). For this reason, Halilovich (2018) came up with the eleventh stage<sup>69</sup> of genocide—‘triumphalism’:

In this stage, perpetrators, their sponsors, and the politics behind genocide do not deny the killings anymore, but glorify them, celebrate their deeds, humiliate the survivors, build monuments to the perpetrators at the sites of the massacres, and create a culture of triumphalism such as has been seen in the parts of Bosnia where Serb militias committed genocide against Bosniaks. (Halilovich 2018, 2500).

Simic (2024) goes even further, exploring that genocide denial permeates from the political sphere into other spheres, such as culture, schools, the arts, sports and social media, mainly in BiH but also in Serbia and Croatia. Simic (2024) argues that political elites are primarily responsible for “setting the tone” in society. As Dodik and other politicians allow themselves to minimise and trivialise genocide, it is not surprising that RS citizens follow suit. Simic (2024) notes that in the last two decades, Dodik has so normalised the genocide denial and heroised war criminals that locals no longer notice things that outsiders would find unacceptable (e.g., murals, t-shirts and other souvenirs glorifying Mladić; student dormitory named after Karadžić). Simic (2024) also discusses a case in which two students were

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<sup>69</sup> Stages of genocide: 1) classification, 2) symbolisation, 3) discrimination, 4) dehumanisation, 5) organisation, 6) polarisation, 7) persecution, 8) preparation, 9) extermination, 10) denial by Gregory H. Stanton (1996), the founder and president of *Genocide Watch*.

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awarded for celebrating genocide instead of being punished. The denialist-friendly Criminal Code's phrasing enables not only genocide denial but also the celebration of war criminals (Simic 2024). Regrettably, in RS, these practices appear more common than opposing them.

Although the Bosniak ethno-political narrative and memory focuses on the suffering of the Srebrenica genocide,<sup>70</sup> this focus appears very political. BiH politicians, including those representing Bosniak interests at the state level, usually only remember Srebrenica on 11 July, a day of remembrance for the Srebrenica genocide (Stevanović 2022). They often exploit Srebrenica commemorations for political gain, overshadowing the significance of the event and sidelining the victims' families and survivors. Families continue to wait for the remains of their loved ones, as many are yet to be found and identified, and fight for justice and recognition. Although 30 years after the genocide has passed, one may find signs glorifying the perpetrators rather than memorialising victims in RS (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021b). The denial of Srebrenica's genocide and its interpretation divide BiH's ethnic groups, leaving Bosnian society increasingly polarised.

Srebrenica looks rather sad today. Despite proclaiming Srebrenica "an area of special economic interest" (Gregulska 2018), the efforts to revitalise and reduce unemployment in Srebrenica were relatively unsuccessful (Stevanović 2022). According to the 2013 census, 7,248 Bosniaks, 6,028 Serbs, 16 Croats, and 117 people of other ethnicities were living in Srebrenica municipality (Statistika.ba 2013). Even if Srebrenica belongs to the RS entity, from 2001 to 2016, Srebrenica was ruled by the Bosniak-dominated municipal government, thanks to those registered to vote in Srebrenica (Gregulska 2018). However, since 2016 (re-elected in 2021), Mladen Grujičić, notorious for his genocide denial, has been the mayor of

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<sup>70</sup> In fact, Bosniak ethno-political narrative broadens the amplitude and employ the notion of the 'Bosnian genocide.'

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Srebrenica. Grujičić follows the line of RS and refuses to accept the notion of ‘genocide.’ (RFE/RL's Balkan Service 2021b; Spaic 2017b). The Bosniaks are primarily concerned about his direct connection to Dodik (Spaic 2017a). Therefore, the political situation remains tense.

While Srebrenica remains the symbol of planned violence and the international community's failure to prevent genocide, the locals desire to live a normal, fulfilling life (Stevanović 2022). The problem is that various initiatives come to Srebrenica from outside, often wanting to make money from the funds rather than doing something for the community. The locals do not trust them much as these initiatives usually disappear shortly. *The House of Good Tones/Kuća dobrih tonova*,<sup>71</sup> established in 2011, shares a slightly different story. Initially, the founders wanted to stay in Srebrenica and build trust. The project focuses on inclusive education and seeks change through entertainment: music, training, community engagement, lifestyle, voluntarism, film and literature. Recently, *the House of Good Tones* also contributed to creating *The Ensemble House/Kuća susreta*,<sup>72</sup> which provides space for learning and sharing knowledge. Students, researchers and visitors from BiH and abroad can book the complex for training and overnight stays. The efforts for justice and remembrance continue, as do the efforts for normality and co-existence in Srebrenica and the wider region.

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<sup>71</sup> In summer of 2023, I had the opportunity to visit the *House of Good Tones*. More information about the project on their official website: <https://houseofgoodtones.org/en/about-us/>.

<sup>72</sup> *The Ensemble House* is the only accommodation option in Srebrenica. Before the war, Srebrenica was a famous Yugoslav resort known for its healing waters, but now there is not a single hotel. *The Ensemble House* provides opportunity not only learn about the difficult history, but also spend time surrounded by nature. More information on their official website: <https://edu.houseofgoodtones.org/#about>.



### 3 Remembrance through Art: Contributions from Memory Studies

Since the beginning of memory studies,<sup>73</sup> there has been a close link between memory and art. Art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg (1866-1929) was among the first scholars to explore the relationship between memory and art. Warburg focused on the memory of art, specifically how artworks, including images and symbols, travel through time and cultures (Erll 2011a, 19–21). Warburg also introduced the concept of *Pathosformel*, defined as “an emotionally charged visual trope” (Becker 2013), from which many contemporary interdisciplinary researchers draw inspiration. A contemporary of his, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), developed a concept of collective memory (fr. *mémoire collective*), which became a cornerstone for the memory studies framework. Art appeared as a medium through which collective memory is constructed, transmitted, and preserved within society (Halbwachs 1992; Erll 2011a). For cultural historian Pierre Nora (b. 1931), artworks can function as *sites of memory* (fr. *lieux de mémoire*), becoming a symbolic marker commemorating significant events, figures, or cultural symbols (Nora 1989; Erll 2011a). Finally, the theories of cultural memory, suggested by interdisciplinary researchers Aleida (b. 1947) and Jan Assmann (1938-2024), are highly relevant to understanding the connection between art and memory. Based on Aleida Assmann’s approach, art preserves encoded cultural content and meanings (*stored/archival memory*, oriented towards the past) and serves as a channel for conveying them (*functional/working memory*, oriented towards the future). In this way, art shapes past perceptions and contributes to forming collective identities and

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<sup>73</sup> Kansteiner and Berger (2021, 206) note that memory studies is now entering its fourth stage, phase, or wave, “marked by a desire to bring the study of memory to bear on a whole slew of liberal political issues including environmental concerns, processes of deindustrialization, post-Communism, the fight against racism, and a concomitant appreciation of migration and migrants, as well as the history of war [...]”

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narratives (Erll 2011a, 28–37).<sup>74</sup> This research deals with *functional memory*: recent commemorative art initiatives oriented towards the future.

This chapter explores the relationship between memory and art, acknowledging the significant role of social engagement and activism in this context. The memory activism framework (Gutman 2017b; Fridman 2022; Gutman et al. 2023) emerges as one of the most innovative subfields of memory studies, providing valuable tools to explore alternative commemorative practices that remember tragic events such as the Srebrenica genocide. Therefore, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to reviewing the memory activism framework, outlining the categories that form the foundation of my research. Although memory activism often implicitly includes an artistic component, the established framework does not offer a separate dimension explicitly dedicated to the artistic approach without a few exceptions (Dragičević Šešić 2016; Altınay et al. 2020; Murphy 2021a, 2021b; Rigney and Smits 2023a). For that reason, the second section explores the relationship between memory, activism and art. First, it focuses on the well-explored art-activism nexus (Serafini 2018; Sholette 2022). Second, it investigates the moderately well-researched memory and art interconnection (Young 1993; Rigney 2021; Huyssen 2022). Thirdly, it involves the memory-art-activism nexus, which proposes three potential outcomes: memory art, alternative commemorative art, and memory activism, depending on the degree of engagement with social or political issues. These outcomes could be defined as non-traditional or non-conventional forms of commemoration that utilise art. Thus, the third section focuses on the transition from traditional to non-traditional forms of remembrance and discusses the significance of art in monumentalisation. While the Collins Dictionary (2014) defines

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<sup>74</sup> I use Erll's (2011a) interpretations and explanations of Assmann's texts due to the lack of English translations and my inability to read German. The topic of functional vs. stored memory is discussed in Aleida Assmann's book *Erinnerungsräume [Memory Spaces]* (1999).

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monumentalisation as the process of commemorating or immortalising something with a monument in a traditional sense, artists have developed more fluid and innovative forms of remembering past events (e.g., installations, performances, digital media, or interactive art), which are discussed in the last section.

### 3.1 *Building Research on Memory Activism*

Memory activism appears as the fundamental framework for this research. It responds to the call of third-wave memory studies scholars (Gutman 2017b; Rigney 2018; Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020; Fridman 2022; Gutman et al. 2023), who encourage fellow researchers to focus on the relationship between memory, activism, and a bottom-up approach, rather than solely concentrating on the traumatic past. Cultural and comparative literature scholar Ann Rigney (2018) notes that research on the traumatic past has been a long-standing issue among memory scholars but appears ineffective in dealing with emerging challenges. Thus, she proposes that memory studies should integrate positive and future-oriented elements that have the potential to bring about positive social changes. Specifically, Rigney (2018) suggests that memory studies could benefit from incorporating insights gained through social movement scholarship, combining them under the memory-activism nexus (*memory activism, memory in activism, and activism in memory*). The memory-activism nexus provides a critical tool for memory activism analysis, which I successfully applied in my previous research (Jaugaitė 2024a) and will adjust in this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that the framework started developing much earlier, and significant studies have been conducted prior to Rigney's (2018) work. Sociologists Elizabeth Jelin (2003) and Yifat Gutman (2017b) pioneered memory activism. Despite being a relatively young subfield of memory studies, memory activism has already made significant progress. Thus, the following paragraphs will explore its genesis and development over recent years.

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Back in 2003, Jelin published a monograph titled *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*, which analysed the struggle of South American societies to deal with the violent past of military dictatorships, overcome established silences and build a democratic future. Thus, for Jelin memory (activism) appears as demanding labour. “As a distinctive feature of the human condition, work is what puts the individual and society in an active and productive position,” Jelin (2003, 23) argues. According to Jelin, memory is a social construct shaped by social, political, and cultural contexts and is highly related to power dynamics. Politicians often use memory to manipulate the public in order to achieve their goals. Therefore, Jelin claims that complex memory and power nexus challenge the efforts to cope with injustice and traumatic pasts in post-regime South American societies. However, she also argues that in the context of violence and human rights violations, memory can play a crucial role in seeking justice from a grassroots civil society perspective. Once societies acknowledge past injustices, they can move forward by supporting the victims and seeking reconciliation, as Jelin (2003) noted.

Furthermore, Gutman (2017b) extensively develops the framework by capturing the concept of memory activism in her study titled *Memory Activism: Reimagining the Past for the Future in Israel-Palestine*. This work focuses on Israeli activist efforts to give a voice to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation by enabling alternative narratives of the 1948 war and the commemoration of the *Nakba*. The *Nakba*, translated from Arabic as ‘the catastrophe,’ refers to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians through the deprivation of their land, space, property and violent displacement, which is deliberately denied by the Israeli state. Gutman (2017b) becomes the first scholar<sup>75</sup> to portray ‘memory activists’ and define ‘memory activism’ as “the strategic commemoration of contested past outside state channels

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<sup>75</sup> Before the book was released in 2017, Gutman consolidated her concept in an article from 2015, which was first published online in 2016 and later in print in 2017 (Gutman 2017a).

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to influence public debate and policy. Memory activists use memory practices and cultural repertoires as means for political ends, often (but not always) in the service of reconciliation and democratic politics” (Gutman 2017b, 1–2).

In this research, Aida Šehović’s ŠTO TE NEMA falls under this memory activism definition.

However, the other two initiatives, Benjamin Zaje’s 8372 and Aida Salkić Haughton’s and Susan Moffat’s *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)*, fluctuate between the

categories of memory activism and alternative commemorative practices. On the one hand,

they materialise outside BiH,<sup>76</sup> so they do not directly participate in the Bosnian public

debate. On the other hand, the Srebrenica genocide is not solely a local issue; it holds

significant international and regional implications. So, the debate has multiple—local,

regional and international—dimensions (see Chapter 4). Also, while Šehović identifies

herself as an artist and activist (or simply activist), 8372 was primarily performed for artistic

purposes, and *My Thousand Year Old Land* aimed to “create the space for stories.”<sup>77</sup>

Although they incorporate activist elements to some degree, 8372 and *My Thousand Year Old*

*Land* lack a substantial emphasis on activism. Alternative commemorative practices,

therefore, could better define those initiatives. In my view, alternative commemorative

practices primarily involve creating new forms of remembrance and community engagement.

While they still address and challenge existing power structures and narratives, they do so

with a less explicit political focus and/or seek long-term effects. However, memory activism

and alternative commemorative practices are closely related.

Extensive Orli Fridman’s research demonstrates the proximity of alternative memory

practices and memory activism. It seems that for Fridman, these notions are almost

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<sup>76</sup> For many years, ŠTO TE NEMA also operated outside BiH. This is broadly discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>77</sup> Susan Moffat and Aida Salkić Haughton, train Stoke-on-Trent-Birmingham, interview by author, January 24, 2023.

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synonyms, only operating on slightly different levels: “Various practices – from alternative commemorative events marked on alternative calendars and the establishment of alternative commemorative rituals to demands for monuments to be built or plaques to be placed, to the production of art or educational materials that inform the public about silenced past events – allow people to interact with this history” (Fridman 2022, 21). Reading Fridman’s (2015, 2022), one gets the impression that she links these practices directly to alternative calendars, which promote counter-memories excluded from the official commemorative calendar exercised by the state. In the case explored by Fridman (2022, 152–57; Fridman and Ristić 2020), memory activists are fighting mnemonic battles for recognition of White Arm Band Day (bcs. *Dan bijelih traka*) on 31 May, which RS banned.

However, before any of my research cases emerged, 11 July (the Srebrenica Genocide Day) already existed in the Bosnian calendar, as well as in the calendar of regional memory activists.<sup>78</sup> Prior to alternative forms of remembrance, there was already a remarkable contribution to commemorating this day officially on different levels, and 11 July has been commemorated annually (see Chapter 4). According to sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (2003a), calendars are essential in commemoration because they establish a commemorative day’s formal and authoritative significance, constructing social meaning and defining mnemonic communities. Also, calendars have the power to institutionalise specific dates by legitimising the historical significance of certain events (Zerubavel 2003a), which is particularly important for events that are only partially recognised (like the Srebrenica genocide) or not recognised at all (like the ethnic cleansing in the Prijedor area). So,

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<sup>78</sup> I thank for this comment made by one of the anonymous reviewers when my article *Digital remembrance: Honouring Srebrenica genocide victims via #ŠtoTeNema* (2024a) was in the peer-review process.

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remembrance practices can also operate outside the calendar time frame but are likely to be less influential and less impactful in this way.

Therefore, 11 July remains crucial not only for traditional commemorations but also for alternative initiatives. The ŠTO TE NEMA nomadic monument<sup>79</sup> was always constructed precisely on 11 July. Zajc's primary intention was also to perform in July. However, he was limited by the academic calendar (in July, many enjoy summer holidays), so he launched 8372 in the spring of 2022 when the global COVID-19 pandemic subsided.<sup>80</sup> *My Thousand Year Old Land* was staged in July<sup>81</sup> (known as the commemorative month of Srebrenica) and January.<sup>82</sup> Once again, the month choice is no coincidence, as the play was part of the programme dedicated to International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau), embodying the *multidirectional memory* concept (Rothberg 2009) that illuminates the interconnectedness of diverse historical narratives in different contexts. The calendar indeed plays a vital role in these alternative commemorative practices.

It is essential to highlight that Fridman's works are very relevant to this dissertation. Living in Belgrade for at least a decade, Fridman had an opportunity to observe and participate in various bottom-up initiatives in Serbia. So, a comprehensive portion of her research was based on these observations. In 2015, Fridman released an article on alternative calendars and memory work in Serbia, highlighting the Srebrenica commemoration in Belgrade. In 2017, Fridman and Hercigonja explored anti-government protests in the context of memory politics of the 1990s in Serbia. In 2019, Fridman, a globally recognised scholar of peace, conflict, and

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<sup>79</sup> This notion is further discussed in section 3.3.

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin Zajc, Ljubljana, 1<sup>st</sup> interview by author, December 8, 2022.

<sup>81</sup> 11-12 July 2022 in New Vic Theatre; 7-8 July 2023 in New Vic Theatre, 13 July in Dewsbury Town Hall.

<sup>82</sup> Twice on 23 January 2023 in New Vic Theatre. I had an opportunity to see both performances on that day.

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memory studies, contributed to *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies* with her short article “Conflict, Memory, and Memory Activism: Dealing with Difficult Pasts.” In 2020, Fridman investigated bottom-up peace formation through the ‘Mirëdita, dobar dan’ festival, which brings artists, activists, and youth from Kosovo and Serbia together as an alternative to everyday nationalism. In 2020, Fridman and Ristić analysed White Armband Day on-site and online commemoration that, from a local and regional level, became a transnational commemorative event. In 2022, Fridman’s many years of work became a solid monograph *Memory Activism and Digital Practices After Conflict: Unwanted Memories*, built on Rigney’s (2018) *memory-activism nexus*. It not only addressed broadly alternative commemorative practices and memory activism in the post-Yugoslav context but also moved toward the digital realm, introducing the whole #hashtag #memoryactivism study framework. Using this framework, I developed an analysis of digital remembrance on Twitter (Jaugaitė 2024a) that complements and broadens this research by addressing the meanings generated online via #ŠtoTeNema. My article concluded that, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, ŠTO TE NEMA became a powerful movement and unofficial face of Srebrenica commemoration online.<sup>83</sup> Although Fridman mainly focuses on Serbian case(s), her works remain crucial for any research on the post-Yugoslav region of memory (activism).<sup>84</sup>

The idea of the (hashtag) memory activism is highly based on *agency*. In other words, it relies on intentional and strategic actions undertaken by individuals, be they concerned citizens, NGOs or artists (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020; Jaugaitė 2024a). A 14-chapter study *Agency in*

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<sup>83</sup> It is worth noting that, in parallel, researcher Véronique Labonté (2024) has published an article on alternative online initiatives led by journalists and/or activists operating at the meso-level of remembrance to counter dominant hegemonic and nationalist narratives in BiH. Although Labonté does not explicitly apply Fridman’s #hashtag #memoryactivism framework, she engages with Wüstenberg and Gutman’s concept of memory agents (or mnemonic actors) in her analysis. Labonté argues that online counter-narratives challenge the established ‘truths’ and open up spaces for dialogue that are crucial in the post-conflict country and the region.

<sup>84</sup> A very similar paragraph was recently published in my article (Jaugaitė 2024a).



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*transnational memory politics* (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020)<sup>85</sup> offers a broad conceptual framework which considers both bottom-up and top-down as well as horizontal activities and explores how they correlate. At the same time, departing from Astrid Erll's (2011b) concept of travelling memory, the contributing authors (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020) aim to develop the concept of transnational memory in the age of globalisation. For example, Hepworth (2020) explores memory activism across borders and combines two relevant keywords in this research. By adding the 'memory activism' factor, Hepworth's (2020) chapter supplements an older article by Björkdahl and Kappler (2019), who already explored how transnational memory overcomes national boundaries. Interestingly, Björkdahl and Kappler (2019) explored *Galerija 11/07/95* (a branch of Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre) as one of the examples of transnational memory spaces. My research will proceed with their attempts to deal with the transnational memory spaces in BiH and beyond, enriching the study with three alternative commemorative initiatives.

Regarding the importance of agency in transnational memory politics (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020), I will pay particular attention to the role of the selected memory *agents* and their motivations to do remembrance work, i.e., raising awareness about the Srebrenica genocide (not only on the local and regional but also on the global level). I aim 1) to investigate art and cultural creators performing as memory agents, 2) to chart their motivations for representing Srebrenica, and 3) to sketch their network and/or interconnectivity with each other. In Chapter 6, I will employ the typology for comparative research on memory activists (Fig. 3.1) developed by (Gutman and Wüstenberg 2021) to examine the agency and its peculiarities. Memory activists indeed deal with the complex, traumatic past, but besides truth and justice, they also orient towards a sustainable future, as Rigney (2018) noted. "[A]

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<sup>85</sup> Especially *Introduction: Agency and practice in the making of transnational memory spaces* (Wüstenberg 2020), *A field-theoretical approach to memory politics* (Dujisin 2020) and conclusions by Aline Sierp (2020).

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new understanding of the past could lead to a new perception of present problems and project alternative solutions for the future” (Gutman 2017a, 54). This research argues that alternative commemorative practices open up (memory) space to remember the victims and generate an effect of transnational mourning, contributing to the recognition of victims as well as peace formation in the post-Yugoslav *region of memory and beyond*.

Mode	Warriors		Pluralists	
Role/ Temporality	The past has ended	The past is ongoing	The past has ended	The past is ongoing
<b>Victims</b>	Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, Spain	Memorial to the Victims of Violence, Mexico	Reconciliatory tours of the Sudetenland by German and Czech activists	Widows Against Violence Empower, Northern Ireland
<b>Resistors &amp; heroes</b>	Former members of the GDR regime and former political prisoners, Germany	The Legacy of Museum in Montgomery, USA	Hiroshima-Auschwitz Peace March	Indigenous memory activists, Canada
<b>Entangled agents</b>	United Daughters of the Confederacy, USA	“We are not Trayvon Martin,” USA	Jewish Revival activism, Poland	Nakba Memory Activism, Israel
<b>Pragmatists</b>	Hubertus Knabe and others in GDR memory politics	Filmmaker Joshua Oppenheim on anti-communist violence in Indonesia	Institutional leaders turned activists for GDR memory	International Centre for Transitional Justice

**Figure 3.1: A typology of memory activists** developed by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021)

The 598-page *Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (Gutman et al. 2023) has enhanced the existing theoretical framework on memory activism as a subfield of memory studies.

Aleida Assmann’s (2023) brief but comprehensive foreword on the ‘activist turn’<sup>86</sup> in memory studies opens the book, providing a short history of memory activism and defining its essence. This *Handbook* includes texts from pioneers of memory activism, such as Gutman, Wüstenberg, Rigney, and Fridman, as well as insights from practitioners like Šehović. Key editors Gutman and Wüstenberg (2023, 5) once again redefine memory

<sup>86</sup> Assmann notes that ‘memory activism’ broke from the conventional ‘politics of history.’

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activism as “strategic commemoration of a contested past to achieve mnemonic or political change by working outside state channels.” Besides civic and democratic examples of memory activism, the *Handbook* also pays attention to right-wing memory activism (Faber 2023; Schmalenberger, Kølvråa, and Forchtner 2023; Assmann 2023), which appears revisionist and dividing. Assmann (2023) presents an intriguing account of two parallel memory movements that emerged in *Perestroika*’s Russia: *Memorial* and *Pamyat*. While *Memorial* sought recognition for the Stalinist victims, *Pamyat* focused on reclaiming Russian national memory. As a result, Putin invoked *Pamyat* in his nationalist memory forge and abolished *Memorial*, which contradicted his narrative. Although memory activism begins working from below and outside the state channels, its goal is to gain broad recognition of the promoted line and secure its place in *public* memory (Gutman and Wüstenberg 2021). The Argentinian *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (Mandolessi 2023) exemplify memory activism leading to positive democratic changes. However, in cases like the Russian *Pamyat*, memory activism can strengthen the regime and silence alternative voices. Thus, memory activism can be twofold and have positive and negative effects.

Sebastian Faber (2023) explores the relationship between revisionist/right-wing and civic/left-wing populist memory activism. In Spain, democratic memory activism emerged as a counterbalance to previously appearing patriotic revisionism and as a reaction to the publication of nationalist books glorifying the Franco regime. In my research case of the Srebrenica genocide, revisionist and inclusive memory activism are also highly correlated. As explored in Chapter 2, while the RS authorities deny the genocide and encourage citizens to celebrate the atrocity (Halilovich 2018; Simic 2024), memory activists try to push for genocide recognition in RS, Serbia and transnationally.<sup>87</sup> The digital space only reflects and

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<sup>87</sup> Most of the denial comes from RS and Serbia, Croatia (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2022, 2023), but also from other countries outside the region, including Russia and France (RFE/RL’s Balkan Service 2021a).

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expands such practices, often favouring radical right-wing digital activism expressed through such hashtags as #NožŽicaSrebrenica<sup>88</sup> (Jaugaitė 2024a). Nevertheless, Faber remarks that,

[I]t would be a mistake to treat left- and right-wing populism, and the forms of memory activism they have spurred, as two sides of the same coin. The memory activism on the right tends to be driven by nostalgia [...]. The history it promotes is remarkably traditional: it consists of stories of patriotic pride and national grandeur, filled with national feats and heroes, and without any of the ethical and epistemological complications of modern historiography [...]. The memory activism on the left, by contrast, is driven by a desire to complicate hegemonic narratives even further by giving voice to subaltern groups. It also seeks to empower today's citizens, in their role as memory activists, as critical participants in the construction of the past, generally with clear political implications for disempowered communities in the present. (Faber 2023, 32)

Most importantly, while the populist right advocates for a return to quite traditional narratives of the national past – including traditional forms of authority – the populist left seeks to give voice to subaltern groups, seeing citizens as critical participants in the politically central task of narrating a collective past. (Faber 2023, 34)

Although right-wing activism employs similar cultural tools and language (such as performing the rituals of mourning and invoking victimhood) as left-wing activism, they have different purposes (Schmalenberger, Kølvråa, and Forchtner 2023). Right-wing activists frequently attempt to create divisions within society, discriminate against vulnerable groups, and disseminate racist, nationalist and hateful messages. In turn, left-wing activists seek the opposite effect: to unite and empower a society where everyone feels equal and acknowledged. This research focuses on the latter type of memory activism that feels responsible for informing society about past crimes (such as the Srebrenica genocide), pursuing genocide prevention, evoking empathy (towards victims and survivors, or simply individuals of different groups) and inclusion.

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<sup>88</sup> En. *Knife, wire, Srebrenica* is a rhymed Serbian chauvinist slogan glorifying the genocide in Srebrenica.

### 3.2 *Memory Commemoration Spectrum: Linking Memory, Activism and Art*

Besides demonstrating more or less characteristics of memory activism, all three selected initiatives embrace artistic elements and present themselves as art initiatives. Therefore, to understand their multifaceted nature, it is essential to introduce the art component and relevant concepts. As mentioned in the chapter's introduction, the memory-art-activism nexus is rarely extensively and directly addressed; however, it is conceptualised through art-activism and memory-art nexuses. This section starts with more explored art-activism relation, moves to memory-art and finally addresses the memory-art-activism nexus, proposing the notion of memory activism, and comparing it with alternative commemorative art. It aims to position commemorative art, memory art, alternative commemorative art and memory activism on the graph, showing their engagement in social change and emphasis on memory.

#### 3.2.1 **Art + Activism = Artivism**

*Art activists do want to be useful, to change the world, to make the world a better place— but at the same time, they do not want to cease being artists.* (Groys 2014)

Art and activism may be blended into the notion of 'artivism.' In simple terms, 'artivism' appears as the compound of 'art' and 'activism' (Salzbrunn 2020), referring to the employment of artistic expression to address social, political, or environmental issues and provoke change. "Combining art and activism, the neologism ARTivism refers to artistic works created with a strong political commitment to social justice" (Pulitano 2022, 164). Art historian and activist Nina Felshin (1995) provides a lucid definition of activist art:

Activist art, in both its forms and methods, is process- rather than objector product-oriented, and it usually takes place in public sites rather than within the context of art-world venues. As a practice, it often takes the form of temporal interventions, such as performance or performance-based activities, media events, exhibitions, and

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installations [...]. A high degree of preliminary research, organisational activity, and orientation of participants is often at the heart of its collaborative methods of execution. (Felshin 1995, 10–11)

So, in short, activist art “is process oriented, temporal, collaborative, and, more often than not, site specific” (Danko 2018, 255). “The activist (artist + activist) uses her artistic talents to fight and struggle against injustice and oppression – by any medium necessary” (McCartney 2019, 25).<sup>89</sup> According to activist Rodney Diverlus<sup>90</sup> (McCartney 2019, 25), “typical activists are thought of as anti-capitalist, antiwar and concerned with sociological and environmental issues.” Artists could be socially and politically engaged artists and/or active citizens (Salzbrunn 2020) who use any art (“puppetry, performance and guerrilla theatre, vandalism and Culture Jamming” (McCartney 2019, 25) to express their position and seek change. Those political or/and social aspirations arise or/and relate to social movements and struggles (Serafini 2018). Simultaneously, art and visuals shape and give form to social movements, making them easily recognisable by the public (Serafini 2018; Sholette 2022) and even creating identity (Rigney and Smits 2023b).

Innovative as it may sound, activism is not a new phenomenon. Artist, activist and scholar Gregory Sholette (2022) claims that the origins of the art of activism can be traced back to the French Revolution and the Paris Commune; however, his book *The Art of Activism and the Activism of Art* focuses on a briefer period of activist art from the 1960s to early 2022. The study begins with the activist alliance known as the *Situationist International* (SI, 1957-1972) and proceeds to examine activism development in the United States, demonstrating its rise and consolidation in recent years. As Sholette (2022) is an active member of various art

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<sup>89</sup> McCartney (2019) cites Molefi Kete Asante, *It's Bigger than Hip Hop* (St. Martin's Griffin: New York, 2009), p. 29.

<sup>90</sup> McCartney (2019) cites Rodney Diverlus, 'Re/imagining Activism', in *Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, Social Responsibility, and Ethical Praxis*, ed. David Elliott, Marissa Silverman and Wayne Bowman (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2016), p. 189–212

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collectives, his book offers insights into activists' agency from an insider's perspective. Most importantly, Sholette's (2022) book illustrates the vanishing boundary between art and activism and the contemporary surge in activism, in which grassroots movements include formally trained artists.

While postcolonial literary scholar Elvira Pulitano (2022) relates the beginning of activism to a manifesto issued by the avant-garde Chicano magazine *ChismeArte* in California in 1976, activism is a global (Aladro-Vico, Jivkova-Semova, and Bailey 2018) and very multiple phenomenon with no singular manifesto or aesthetic cannons (Sholette 2022). Constructing a linear history of activism would be challenging (Sholette 2022) due to its emergence in different parts of the world under different circumstances and at different times. Also, activism has no official school or former vocabulary but emerges as a movement (Sholette 2022). The resistance towards injustice and oppression (Mažeikaitė 2020), as well as creativity and theatricality (Serafini 2018), unites activism, emerging in various places around the globe as a group from one country learns from another how to fight back through art and avant-garde techniques, Andreas Huyssen notes (Memory Studies Association 2023).

No wonder scholarship on activism appears fragmented, making it difficult to identify a clear thread. It is interesting to note that many activists, in the course of their careers, have turned into scholars (Serafini 2018); hence, scholarship on activism often emerges directly from empirical practice. One of the first contributions comes from an American writer, art critic, activist, and curator, Lucy R. Lippard (1984). In her essay, *Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power*, Lippard (1984) defines and describes activist art, explaining the context in which it emerged in the United States. Felshin's (1995) book is one of the earliest and most comprehensive examinations of activist public art with a social change agenda, and its insights remain highly relevant today. In Europe, the main interest area of this research, the

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contemporary contribution on activism comes from Slovenian theatre and performing arts scholar Aldo Milohnić (2005a, 2005c).<sup>91</sup> It is essential to highlight a massive block of contemporary literature on activism from the Global South,<sup>92</sup> especially from Spanish-speaking parts.<sup>93</sup> Given the legacy of violent post-dictatorship regimes, Latin American literature dealt with art, memory and activism long before it became a theme in European memory studies. The most fundamental contributions to art and activism in Central and South America come from Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard (Richard, Nelson, and Tandeciarz 2004), performance professor Diana Taylor (2020), and researcher Ana Longoni (2017).<sup>94</sup> Richard's *The Insubordination of Signs*, which examines the politically engaged Chilean art collective CADA (*Colectivo Acciones de Arte*), masterly captures art's role in political resistance. Through CADA's actions, Richard demonstrates how art transcends aesthetic borders to become a powerful tool for social change in the everyday struggles of Chilean people, including state violence, inequality and cultural repression. For Richard, art functions as a form of activism rather than exists for art's sake.

After several decades of struggle, activism has become more visible and influential than ever before, to such an extent that "the curator Peter Weibel suggests it [activist art] 'may be the first new art form of the twenty-first century'" (Sholette 2022, 17). Thus, activism has become "a global phenomenon of growing importance" (Aladro-Vico, Jivkova-Semova, and Bailey 2018, 11). Correspondingly, the literature on activism is also expanding and flourishing.

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<sup>91</sup> Here, I refer to the reprinted and translated English versions. The original version was released in *Maska* journal (Milohnić 2005b). Later, this publication was released in other journals at least 8 times in various languages.

<sup>92</sup> Many countries of the Global South continue to struggle with their post-colonial legacy and emerging global challenges, so, naturally, most of the newest scholarship comes from there.

<sup>93</sup> During my search for literature, the search results were dominated by literature written in Spanish.

<sup>94</sup> I would like to thank my reviewer Daniele Salerno for bringing these authors to my attention. I quote the English (versions of their) texts that I managed to scan, rather than the most prominent Spanish texts.



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Ultimately, as Alimen, Alimen, and Isidro (2023, 40) remark, “[a]rtivism has become a new paradigm integrating art criticism and social transformation through artistic empowerment.”

Despite the extensive scholarship on activism, cultural politics scholar, artist, and educator Paola Serafini (2018) notes that it lacks theoretical and methodological depth. Serafini (2018) primarily highlights the need for a more comprehensive combination between the disclosure of the aesthetic value of such art and the employment of social movement scholarship. Thus, her study *Performance Action: The Politics of Art Activism* addresses these gaps and lays the foundations for an interdisciplinary theory of art activism. To examine the participation in performance action, which encompasses the boundaries between theatre and performance art, Serafini (2018) discusses the art historian and educator Kaija Kaitavuori’s (2014) typology of participation in art. This typology classifies participants into four categories: targets, users, material and co-creators, depending on their interaction and stage of intervention. Serafini (2018) challenges Kaitavuori (2014), suggesting her classification of regular participants, spontaneous participants, and spectators. These typologies facilitate a more profound understanding of audience involvement in selected cases of this research (see Chapter 7). Memory studies often lack an in-depth analysis of audience engagement, mainly focusing on representations and agency, and this research aims to contribute to this gap by relying on activist literature.

### 3.2.2 Memory Art

Memory art concept evolves from the interdisciplinary field of memory studies. The study of contemporary memory art is not a new research area (Young 1992; Young 1993; Saltzman 2006; Gibbons 2007). One of the newest, groundbreaking, thought-provoking publications is *Memory Art in the Contemporary World: Confronting Violence in the Global South* (2022), written by German philology and comparative literature professor Andreas Huyssen. He

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broadly explores and describes the selected examples of memory art but never provides a definition; however, his book is supplemented and expanded through several online book presentations and lectures (UCLA Working Group in Memory Studies 2023; Memory Studies Association 2023; Sholette 2023). In my understanding, *memory art* stands for a type of art that focuses on personal or collective (usually violent and traumatic) past. As Huyssen demonstrates, memory art emerges from the political imperative to deal with the difficult past, such as the Holocaust. In his latest research, Huyssen (2022) focuses beyond Northern Transatlantic and the post-Soviet world and explores parallels of transnational memory art on colonialism, apartheid, state terror, and civil war in the Global South. However, memory art encompasses not only the past but also the present and future. “At stake [of memory art] was never only the historical past, but rather a living memory in the present that would prevent such political and radical violence in the future,” notes Huyssen (2022, 10). Thus, like activist art, memory art carries hope for the future. “By focusing on difficult and often repressed memories in their national contexts, their work fundamentally points to the failures rather than the successes of memory, but it is guided by the hope of mobilising historical memory through affect and aesthetic experience to help us think about alternative futures” (Huyssen 2022, 14). Huyssen (2022, 14) notes that ‘memory art’ arises from ‘acts of memory’,<sup>95</sup> a notion employed by Colombian visual artist and sculptor Doris Salcedo in her works:

[Acts of memory] whether focused more on empathy or on cognition, they all articulate strong ethical demands on their societies and they speak to an emerging global sphere of commemorating human-caused disasters across nations and across continents. They are acts of memory in the present. At the same time, they embody a differential globality in the ways they address local histories and weave local aesthetic traditions into a transnational fabric made up of multi-directional aesthetic and political threads. (Huyssen 2022, 156)

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<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that acts of memory are widely explored in a publication by (Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer) (1999) under the same title – *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*. Huyssen (1996) also contributed to this volume.

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Thus, memory art can be defined as empathic, transnational, and multi-directional (Rothberg 2009). It bears a moral obligation to witness traumatic events by embracing the counter-monumental dimension (Huyssen 2022, 19). In contrast to activist art, Huyssen's selected art examples are presented within particular institutions, such as museums and galleries. Also, Huyssen's selected artworks share no illusions about achieving a radical change; however, they seek to "create spaces of reflection and empathy, to question and challenge reified forms of official and sanctioned memory, to create shared meaning in deeply divided societies, to strengthen demands for accountability, to sabotage organised forgetting. And last but not least, to resist the neofascist memory revisionism that has recently arisen in many parts of the world," says Huyssen (SOF/Heyman Bookshelf 2023). According to Huyssen (2022), the mode of memory art emerges quite indirectly, uses intimate language, seeks slow reception and long-term effects. Respectively, Huyssen (2022) identifies a more direct and active art intervention, "political art activism," which he does not investigate further in his book but mentions during oral presentations (UCLA Working Group in Memory Studies 2023; Memory Studies Association 2023). Unlike contemplative *acts of remembrance* or *mourning*, *political art activism* functions as a "direct crisp and cutting intervention in the public sphere," seeking immediate impact (Memory Studies Association 2023).

It is valuable to break down Huyssen's (2022) definition of "political art activism," which comprises several elements: political, art, and activism. These notions are highly related but create different meanings when couples combine. According to visual artist and scholar Maria Papanikolaou (2008), political art and activist art are close but quite different phenomena, usually evaluated by the artist's involvement in social change:

Political art and activist art may have the same ideological background and the same desire and content, but its formal strategies, methodology and the activist goals are different. While in activist art the art piece is a vehicle for the action, in political art the action stops in the realisation of the art piece. The goal of activist art is social change, while the goal of political art is the art piece itself. Let us imagine society as a mirror.

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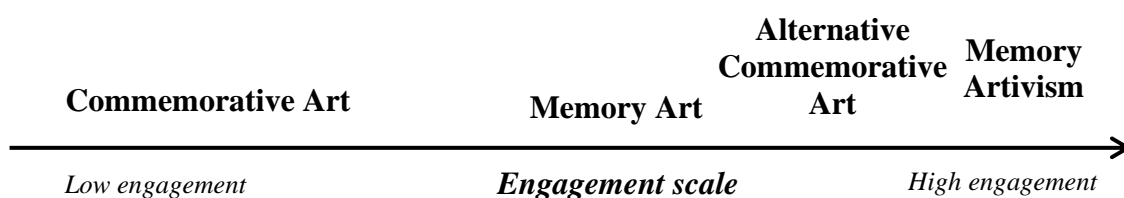
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Political art is content when it sees itself in the mirror, convinced that an image of a better world is enough for the world to change for the better. Activist art looks at the ugly face of the world that reflects in the mirror, breaks the mirror and uses the broken pieces to build a new world. (Papanikolaou 2008, 22–23)



**Figure 3.2: Engagement scale of political art in comparison with art activism**, created by the author, following Papanikolaou's (2008) description

So, political art and activist art are seemingly contradictory forms of art. I created an engagement scale (Fig. 3.2) following Papanikolaou's (2008) description. There is no clear line between political art and activism because this line can be blurred, with some art projects falling somewhere in between. In parallel, I want to suggest another corresponding scale (Fig. 3.3) which suits this research better. Additionally, the following subsection develops this figure (Fig. 3.3) into a more advanced Figure 3.4.



**Figure 3.3: Engagement scale of commemorative art, memory art, alternative commemorative art and memory activism**, created by the author

In short, commemorative art takes the role of political art and embodies the traditional form of expression. Also, it appears pretty passive in effecting change and exists primarily to preserve memory. Memory activism presents a contrasting position to commemorative art. Memory activism, the activist art equivalent shown in Figure 3.3, actively advocates for specific values and drives change, embracing non-conventional forms of remembrance.

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While alternative commemorative art leans towards memory activism, memory art positions itself between commemorative art and memory art, marking relatively low engagement. The following subsection introduces the notion of memory activism and reveals its relationship with similar notions concerning memory and art.

### 3.2.3 Memory Activism and Alternative Commemorative Art: Art as Catalyst for Change and Commemoration

The notion of memory activism sounds like the best fulfilment of the memory-art-activism nexus. *Memory activism* explicitly refers to memory activism practised through art and operates as a joint substance of art, memory and activism. To my knowledge, this particular notion has not been widely applied in European memory studies.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, some studies examine memory activism. For example, Dragičević Šešić (2016) analyses the emergence of counter-monuments and anti-monuments,<sup>97</sup> which artists, together with concerned citizens, project in the post-Yugoslav space. *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (Gutman et al. 2023) passingly mentions art expressions in memory activism (just to mention a few: Robles-Moreno (2023), Rigney (2023) and even includes activists' voices: Di Lellio (2023) explores Kosovar Alketa Xhafa-Mripa's participatory art installation *Mendoj për Ty (Thinking of You)* to remember the survivors of sexual violence during Kosovo conflict, while Whigham (2023) presents an interview with Aida Šehović about her ŠTO TE NEMA nomadic monument to remember Srebrenica genocide victims. By composing the stimulating *Memory Activism Manifesto*, Reading (2023) pays attention to the importance of art and its facilities supplying memory activism). However, in general, the *Handbook* does

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<sup>96</sup> It is worth noting that the very notion of activism is criticised for its contradictory nature, i.e. the attempt to identify art directly with activism, with one or the other element outweighing the other (aesthetics trumping the ambition of activism, or the pursuit of activism through cheap aesthetics), or equated with the naivety of believing that art in the form of activism can save the world.

<sup>97</sup> Dragičević Šešić (2016) employs 'counter-monument' and 'anti-monument' as synonyms. However, as I show in the last part of this chapter, these two notions have slight differences.

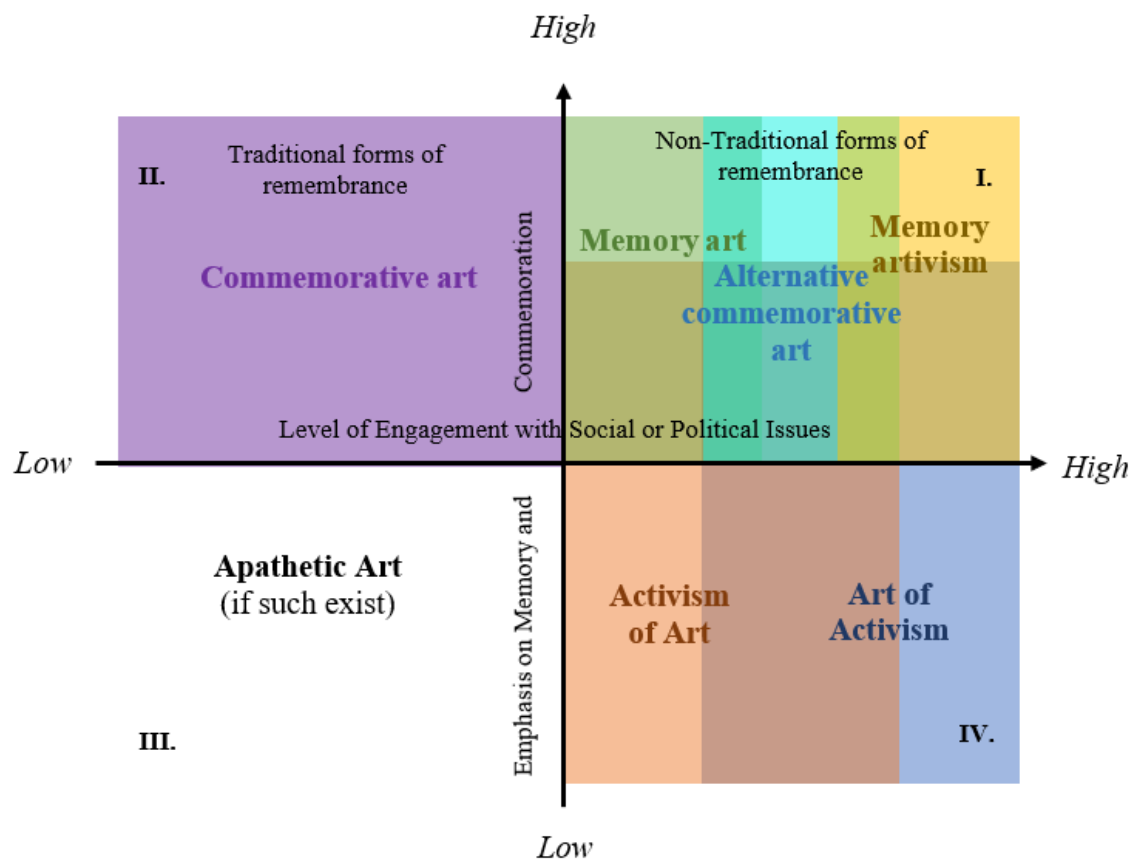
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not fully explore the role of art in commemorating historical events. This research aims to fill this gap and view art as a catalyst for change and/or commemoration.

It must be acknowledged that not all artworks with specific memory activism characteristics qualify as memory activism. Therefore, I want to suggest the graph (Fig. 3.4), which identifies three possible outcomes on different levels that emerge from the *memory-art-activism nexus* (see I Quadrant, further I Q): memory art (green zone), alternative commemorative art (sky-blue zone) and memory activism (yellow zone). These outcomes are obtained by employing an x-axis, which marks the level of engagement with social or political issues and a y-axis of emphasis on memory and commemoration. All these outcomes (in I Q) could be identified as non-traditional or non-conventional forms of remembrance, which are discussed in the following section of this chapter. The II Q (purple zone) marks commemorative art, which stands for traditional forms of commemoration (such as monuments and statues) and excludes activist elements. Commemorative art primarily seeks to remember historical events using art as a tool. Therefore, its level of engagement may be quite limited. In contrast, non-traditional forms of remembrance (Q I) seek more active (contemplative or/and engaging) remembrance or even to bring social change in the case of memory activism. Memory art shares a moderate and quite intimate level of engagement, as Huyssen's (2022) study shows. Although memory art appears subdued and operates on a different level, it has hidden ambitions to contribute to truth and justice:

Far from reducing art to the representation of past events, this memory-oriented work, whether consciously intended or not, is challenging its audiences to develop transnational solidarity and an imagination of alternative futures. Fully aware of its limited political effects, it is avant-gardist without the historical avant-garde's dream about changing the world through art [...]. But it does feed into national and transnational struggles for human rights in the face of rising tide of 21<sup>st</sup>-century fascisms facilitated by finance capitalism's neo-liberal policies of dispossession and its ruinous effects on social cohesion. (Huyssen 2022, 15)



**Figure 3.4: Graph demonstrating the outcomes of memory-art-activism nexus (see I. Quadrant)** based on the level of engagement with social or political issues and emphasis on memory and commemoration, created by the author

Memory activism, emerging from memory activism (Fridman 2022; Gutman et al. 2023) and art activism (Serafini 2018; Sholette 2022) have clear ambitions for recognising past injustices and silences and aim to contribute towards fundamental changes in the memory politics sphere. Memory activism, as memory activism (defined by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2023, 5), appears as a “strategic commemoration of a contested past to achieve mnemonic or political change by working outside state channels” and employing art. Art may serve as a medium to communicate the message and inform the public (Serafini 2018). However, it could also provide a platform and create powerful symbolic meaning, in the same way, art (and visual) visualises social movements, making them broadly visible and creating identity (Serafini 2018; Sholette 2022; Rigney and Smits 2023b). Finally, art can foster

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understanding, stimulate empathy and open up complex topics, such as war crimes and genocides (Jaugaitė 2021), “inspiring us to take on different perspectives and to reimagine our worlds” (Nossel 2016, 103). However, as previously discussed, memory activism and memory artivism could benefit both left-wing and right-wing purposes (Schmalenberger, Kølvråa, and Forchtner 2023). As Gutman (2017b, 1–2) accurately noted, memory activists (in this case, artists) often employ memory, cultural and artistic practices to pursue democratic objectives; nevertheless, these practices could be used for undemocratic purposes too. For that reason, some scholars (Zupančič, Kočan, and Vučko 2021) are sceptical about positive art’s impact on society.

Although Fridman (2022) seems to employ the notions of memory activism and alternative commemorative practices as synonyms, I want to argue that memory activism (followed by memory artivism) has a higher level of engagement for social change than alternative commemorative practices (and alternative commemorative art accordingly). While both involve elements of commemoration and artistic expression, their intentions vary. Alternative commemorative art primarily aims to honour and remember specific events marked on (alternative) calendars, while memory artivism embodies an activist nature and employs art for change. While memory artivism has the highest engagement level of these three categories, memory art has the lowest or a very different kind of involvement: “[Its] politics are not those of an activist art that is geared to direct intervention in the street, on the stage or in the public sphere at large. These works have another temporality. They are activist even avant-gardist, in a different sense as ‘acts of memory’ [...]. Rather than locking us into a past, acts of memory are of the present with an eye to the future” (Huyssen 2022, 14). Hence, memory art also includes an activist element, but it works on a different level and appears less obvious, functioning in a more private sphere. In this case, alternative commemorative art finds itself in between memory art and memory artivism.



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	Traditional Forms of Remembrance	Non-Traditional Forms of Remembrance		
	Commemorative Art	Memory Art	Alternative commemorative Art	Memory Activism
<b>Aim</b>	Remember	Reflect/ contemplate	Move	Change
<b>Intervention</b>	Direct	In-direct	Semi-direct	Direct
<b>Space</b>	Open/Public squares	Galleries/ museums	Any	Open/Public squares
<b>Accessibility</b>	High	Limited	Could be limited	High
<b>Engagement with social and/or political issues</b>	Low	Medium	Quite high	High
<b>Dependence on institutions</b>	Dependent	Mostly dependent	Could be both dependent and independent	Mostly independent
<b>Audience participation</b>	Passive	Personal and intimate	Usually, quite active	Very active
<b>Absorption</b>	Passive	Slow	Quite active	Active

**Figure 3.5: Table that demonstrates the main characteristics of conventional remembrance forms and non-conventional remembrance forms, created by the author**

Nevertheless, all unconventional forms of remembrance, whether at a lower or higher level, share characteristics of future orientation, (moderate) hope and empathy for the victims. Thus, in general, Huyssen's (2022; Memory Studies Association 2023; UCLA Working Group in Memory Studies 2023), and Rigney's (2018) (and even Fridman's (2022) conceptual frameworks correlate.<sup>98</sup> As Huyssen argues (Sholette 2023), all these kinds of artworks fight against forgetting; they just do it in different techniques or ways, choosing a more contemplative, reflective and inductive way (as memory art: acts of remembrance/ mourning) or making a more direct intervention in the public sphere. Therefore, the whole of Q I is divided by the overlapping categories of the memory art, alternative commemorative art and memory activism. However, they also share slight differences. To show the main characteristics of conventional forms of remembrance (commemorative art) and non-

<sup>98</sup> I thank my reviewer Daniele Salerno for allowing me to see that Huyssen's oral description of the memory-activism-art relationship closely parallels with my thesis and is in dialogue with Rigney's conceptual framework.

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conventional forms of remembrance (memory art, alternative commemorative art and memory activism) and illustrate the findings, I propose the table above (see Fig. 3.5).

The proposed graph (Fig. 3.4) also includes the art of activism and activism of art (IV Q), which historically merge, as Sholette (2022) noted. When discussing these two terms, Sholette refers to the time dimension: artistic activism refers to the second half of the 20th century and activist art to the 21st century and current realities. In artistic activism, art functions as a method and a tool, emphasising its creative potential. Meanwhile, in activist art, the artistic work is deeply embedded in and inseparable from social and political engagement, with activism as the primary focus. Therefore, activist art may be seen as more socially and politically embedded, prioritizing social engagement over artistic merit, while artistic activism balances creativity with activism primarily focusing on creative expression. However, the terms used in Sholette's book title are 'the art of activism' and 'the activism of art.' After agonising over these terms—reworking Figure 3.4 multiple times, reading them together a dozen times and watching his book presentations on YouTube—I understand that *the art of activism* refers to artists engaging in social movements and protests, prioritizing action, while *the activism of art* focused on long-term cultural and/or social critique rather than seek immediate, action-based change. Huyssen (UCLA Working Group in Memory Studies 2023) classifies his selected acts of memory discussed in his book as *activism of art* rather than *art activism*,<sup>99</sup> although his chosen artist, Doris Salcedo, also has organised public mourning memorials, which could count as activism. Hence, both authors agree that the line between art and activism is now blurred, as Figure 3.4 attempts to capture.

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<sup>99</sup> Huyssen and Sholette know each other's work well. Their most recent books *Memory Art in the Contemporary World* and *The Art of Activism and the Activism of Art* and have been published by the same publisher, forming a kind of collection, complementing and encountering each other. The authors even held a joint launch available online (Sholette 2023).

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The *art of activism* and *activism of art* may include the memory aspect. Q 1 illustrates how they merge with non-traditional forms of remembrance. Initially, the memory art territory was green; the alternative commemorative art was indicated in sky blue, and memory activism was marked in yellow. However, while merging with each other (as well as with the *art of activism* and *activism of art* categories) in I Q, they have taken new shades of colour: new objectives and aims. Hence, the I Q illustrate their interaction, overlapping and fluctuation. As a result, memory art, alternative commemorative art, and memory activism are highly related and interweaved concepts rather than separate categories. The graph (Fig. 3.4) helps to indicate their level of engagement and emphasis on memory, proposing zones of different colours rather than specific settled points, while the table (Fig. 3.5) highlights their other characteristics. Finally, III Q illustrates apathetic and apolitical art (if such even exists) with no or low interest in engaging and including memory. Although it is questionable whether there is art for art's sake, this quarter has been chosen to create a rather self-explanatory chart.

### 3.3 *Non-Conventional Forms of Remembrance: The Shift in Monumentality and Monumentalisation*

Activist Aida Šehović defines ŠTO TE NEMA as a nomadic<sup>100</sup> monument. As a historian by training, I was sceptical about such a definition and preferred calling it a *participatory installation* at the beginning of this research. However, it made me think about the purpose of monuments over time. The first associations were traditional grandeur monuments in squares: stable, steadfast and immovable. Ironically, these 'immovable' monuments become among the first targets once the regime changes (Antanavičiūtė 2019; Praczyk 2020; Assmann 2021). So, monuments serve as a means of consolidating power and promoting a particular

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<sup>100</sup> Initially, this concept appeared innovative, but later I discovered that Huyssen (1996) used the term 'nomadic installation' to describe the environmental artwork *Wrapped Reichstag* by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

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ideology. Public art projects like ŠTO TE NEMA function as anti-monuments, which aim to resist the established order, suggest alternative narratives and promote different values.

Choosing the notion of a ‘nomadic monument’ is ingenious because ‘nomadic’ and ‘monument’ seem to contradict each other, as ‘monuments’ typically are never ‘nomadic.’

Nevertheless, contemporary artists and activists intend to propose new types of monuments that genuinely appeal to and speak to the public. This section reviews the debates on conventional forms of remembrance, counter-monuments, and anti-monuments. Also, it examines the shift in monumentality and monumentalisation, simultaneously exploring the significance of art in these processes.

Firstly, discussing the distinction between memorials and monuments that may be not so obvious is essential. These concepts are related, but there are some differences. “[W]e erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget [...]. Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honour the dead. With monuments, we honour ourselves,” notes art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto (Young 1993, 3). In turn, Holocaust scholar James E. Young argues that a single object could serve both functions. The distinction between monuments and memorials may not be rigid, and establishing fixed borders between them may not be valuable. However, interdisciplinary memory scholar Kaitlin M. Murphy (2021b) suggests focusing on the purpose of monuments, which diverges from memorials, and considering what role monuments could play in contributing to communities moving ahead.

Monuments can be problematic. Young (1993) and Huyssen (1996) primarily associate (traditional) monuments with deficient taste, with 19th-century nationalism and 20th-century totalitarianism. Traditional monuments tend to idealise the past, boosting a nation’s self-

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esteem and establishing national authority. Therefore, they communicate history superficially and sometimes even distort it.

Traditionally, state-sponsored memory of a national past aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth, even its divine election. The matrix of a nation's monuments traditionally employs the story of ennobling events, of triumphs over barbarism, and recalls the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national existence—who, in the martyrological refrain, died so that a country might live. In suggesting themselves as the indigenous, even geological outcrops in a national landscape, monuments tend to naturalise the values, ideals, and laws of the land itself. To do otherwise would be to undermine the very foundations of national legitimacy, of the state's seemingly natural right to exist. (Young 1992, 270)

Simultaneously, monuments tend to be non-inclusive, representing only one, usually the dominant, social group. They thus legitimise social exclusion and hegemonic narratives, which are difficult to resist (Bosch 2017; Wells 2023). The monuments dedicated to figures or events associated with colonialism, imperialism, slavery and oppression are the best evidence of such exclusion. By their very existence, these monuments affirm that the past is not over; on the contrary, it is tenacious and ongoing. “The harrowing legacies of antisemitism, slavery, and colonialism are continued in practices of social injustice, exclusion, and ongoing humiliation in the present,” notes Assmann (2023, 3). In the case of BiH (and the post-Yugoslav space), every dominant ethnic group erects monuments for their own heroes and victims (Kuljić 2019). Such practice denies the possibility of other narratives, like those of other ethnic groups and ethnic minorities, including victims and survivors of massacres (Hodžić 2010; Sivic-Bryant 2015). Generally, cases when the dominant group erects monuments to the victims of its own violence and crimes are rare (Young 1993, 21).

Moreover, monuments have a feature to become ‘invisible, at least for the passerbyes’ (Assmann 2021). As a philosophical writer, Robert Musil noticed, “There is nothing so

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invisible as a monument” (Huyssen 1996, 184).<sup>101</sup> The erection of monuments promises that the memory work will be done for the community, sometimes even redeeming past sins (Huyssen 1996, 184). Nevertheless, as mentioned before, memory is an exhausting labour that requires much more effort than erecting monuments, including documentation, narration, education, seeking justice and social transformation (Jelin 2003). Musil observed one more interesting paradox about monuments having the opposite effect: instead of fulfilling their function of evoking memory, they encourage forgetting (Assmann 2021).<sup>102</sup> Finally, according to Musil, monuments rely on an outdated attention system and, therefore, miss visual cues (Assmann 2021). In other words, they appear dull to contemporary<sup>103</sup> consumers.

To challenge problems associated with traditional modes of commemoration and memorialisation, Young (1992) and Huyssen (1996, 1999)<sup>104</sup> suggested two concepts that disrupt traditional monumentality and their circulated dominant narratives: counter-monument (Young 1992) and anti-monument (Huyssen 1996). Dragičević Šešić (2016) uses these concepts as synonyms, assuming that sociologist Todor Kuljić translated counter-monument as anti-monument in the BCS language, consolidating the use of such terms in the region. Although Dragičević Šešić (2016) cites both Young and Huyssen, she does not mention that they developed these close but slightly distinct concepts in different ways. Although both concepts emerged to engage with memory, their context varies. Young’s (1992) ‘counter-monument’ appeared within the context of post-Holocaust memory culture, which eventually recognised the need to address Holocaust memory more effectively and

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<sup>101</sup> Huyssen (1999) cites from Robert Musil’s (1978) “Nachlaß zu Lebzeiten,” in: *Gesammelte Werke* 2; Reinbek: Rowohly, p. 506–509. I did not have access to check the reference but Assmann’s reference is slightly different (see the following footnote).

<sup>102</sup> Assmann (2021) cites from Robert Musil’s (1978) “Denkmäler,” in: *Gesammelte Werke* 2; Reinbek: Rowohly, p. 506–509.

<sup>103</sup> Originally, he wrote the text in 1927(!) (Assmann 2021).

<sup>104</sup> In 1999, Huyssen published the same essay in *Acts of memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*.

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honestly than traditional monuments had. In this context, counter-monuments<sup>105</sup> created a possibility to engage with traumatic Holocaust memory, providing space for reflection, mourning, and dialogue that traditional monuments could not offer.

With audacious simplicity, the counter-monument thus flouts number of cherished memorial conventions: its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet. By defining itself in opposition to the traditional memorial's task, the counter-monument illustrates concisely the possibilities and limitations of all memorials everywhere. In this way, it functions as a valuable "counter-index" to the ways time, memory, and current history intersect at any memorial site. (Young 1992, 276–77)

Huyssen (1996) situates his 'anti-monument' concept within the broader context of postmodernism and globalisation. So, it is not necessarily focused solely on traumatic events, such as the Holocaust, or historical events in general. Huyssen (1996) finds traditional monuments aesthetically, politically, socially, ethically, psychoanalytically, and even musically suspect, so he looks for alternatives and comes up with contemporary art. According to Huyssen (1996), contemporary artworks embody anti-monuments because they subvert traditional monumentality by challenging dominant narratives and power structures. Also, they can accomplish "memory work" (Bal 1999), something that monuments cannot, as discussed above. Contrary to overconfident and hegemonic monuments, anti-monuments invite the public to question well-established truths, including those about history and memory.

Both concepts depart from traditional remembrance and memorialisation, embracing innovative artistic practices and forms of expression. However, it seems that Young's (1992) counter-monuments appear as improved traditional monuments incorporating new elements

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<sup>105</sup> Such as *Monument Against Fascism* by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz and *Aschrott Fountain* by Horst Hoheisel (Young 1992).

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into their physical structure, thereby transforming their appearance and meaning. In turn, Huyssen's (1996) anti-monuments take new forms, such as installations, performances, or interventions in public spaces, subverting conventional forms of commemoration.

Nevertheless, counter-monuments and anti-monuments collectively criticise traditional monuments' limitations to foster more inclusive approaches to memory and commemoration. Thus, they both seek to create memorial spaces for active engagement and participation, inviting the public to engage with that space. Instead of providing answers, they encourage the audience to rethink and reflect on essential questions of the past and present, bringing back the complexity and contradictions of memory pushed aside by traditional monuments.

Murphy (2021b) presents a more optimistic view towards monuments. Instead of proposing new concepts, she suggests rethinking monuments, practises of monumentality, and monumentalisation, offering a fresh perspective on the monument concept and function.

Murphy (2021b) treats monuments as speech acts<sup>106</sup> that embody past narratives and shape desirable future values. "[M]onuments are neither inherently good nor bad [...]; what determines their success is the nature of the speech act and its reception in the community.

This is where the problem often lies. Historically, monuments were not used to bring communities together in dialogue and reconciliation but rather to secure narratives of nation-building and White, male power," remarks Murphy (2021b, 1147). Thus, she suggests reimagining monuments that advocate for representative, community-driven decisions to

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<sup>106</sup> "Monuments effectively function as speech acts: they are public proclamations of certain narratives that are intended to simultaneously reify that narrative and lay claim to the space in which the monument has been placed. The speech act was coined by philosopher and linguist J.L. Austin (1962) who [...] argued that certain kinds of speech are like performances - what he called speech acts. Austin breaks down in detail how speech acts work and the conditions for success or failure, arguing that successful speech acts do not simply convey information; they actually "do" something, ushering in or creating a new state of affairs. While the examples he gives are based in spoken language (e.g. the uttering of "I do" in a marriage ceremony), monuments are intended to work in much the same way the making of the claim is an attempt to make the claim true." (Murphy 2021b, 1147).



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foster inclusivity.<sup>107</sup> To illustrate the verisimilitude of such monuments, Murphy (2021b) presents two case studies: Ada Pinkston's performance *Landmarked* on empty pedestals left after the removal of 48 Confederate monuments and Aida Šehović's nomadic participatory monument ŠTO TE NEMA, which is also a selected case for this research. Both works contradict the traditional understanding of monuments and monumentality, and none glorifies a particular individual; instead, they pay tribute to the deceased: unknown Black women who contributed to the progress of the United States and victims of the Srebrenica genocide. Simultaneously, *Landmarked* and ŠTO TE NEMA acknowledge those who have inherited the aftermath of violence, advocating for "an end to ongoing cycles of violence" (Murphy 2021b, 1154). Therefore, breaking with traditional canons, such monuments appear as expressions of civic action and represent democratic values. Šehović's interview with Murphy perfectly summarises this new approach towards monumentality:

I get really frustrated that we are stuck with these really old patriarchal forms of monuments that don't function. They just become backdrops and are largely ignored. I was really interested in thinking about, "if a monument is supposed to be relevant because it's a way for us to talk about our history, and it's a way for us to remember together collectively in a public space, what does it need to do to actually really function, to really work to bring people together and transform them from passive viewers into participants? (Šehović, January 2021, interview with Murphy (2021b, 1151))

Inclusive participation appears to be one of the pillars of the monumentalisation shift. In contrast to traditional monuments, which were used passively (except for commemorations at the monuments, where participation was relatively high), non-traditional monuments encourage active participation<sup>108</sup> ("representative community-based decision-making," as

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<sup>107</sup> In another article, Murphy (2021a) additionally explores the role of art in genocide prevention through ŠTO TE NEMA.

<sup>108</sup> In ŠTO TE NEMA's case, active participation meant donating cups, creating space for the monument, working with the local community and building-community, pouring the coffee cups, informing the passers-by about the genocide, "expanding communities of knowledge" (Murphy 2021b, 1149–50). "By laying the empty cups down and inviting others to fill them, Šehović invited viewers to participate in a shared process of learning, remembering, mourning, and healing" notes Murphy (2021b, 1150).

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Murphy defines) among different social groups. As Murphy's (2021b) research demonstrates, art plays a significant role in making monuments participatory and inclusive. The idea of (democratic) participation through art relates well to the previously discussed activist literature and returns us to the memory-art-activism nexus: "Audience participation in art as a consequence of the performative turn has probably created the historical prerequisites for the new civic participation in democracy," notes curator Peter Weibel (Salzbrunn 2021, 176). Not by chance, Lippard (1984, 1) remarks that "[a]ctivist art-sometimes [is] called "the movement for cultural democracy" (Lippard 1984, 1). Finally, "[a]rtivism uses artistic expressions, aesthetics and symbolism to stimulate public awareness and knowledge of specific historical facts and social attitudes, calling the audience to get involved and (re)act" (Palomo-Domínguez, Jiménez-Marín, and Sánchez-Gey Valenzuela 2023, 26). Integrating art and participatory approaches in monument-making fosters inclusivity and empowers communities to actively shape their collective memory and civic identity, reflecting a broader movement towards cultural democracy and social activism.

In the cited interview above (Murphy 2021b, 1151), Šehović references gender, relating traditional monuments to patriarchy. The gender dimension—covering gender representation and reflection—plays a significant role in both monumentality and activism. Traditionally, monuments embody the power of White men, leaving women in the margins (Murphy 2021b). Not by chance, Murphy (2021b) indicates White men in particular because gender is not the sole determining factor. Intersectionality, which emerged and developed in parallel with the memory activism framework (Chidzey 2023),<sup>109</sup> highlights how various marginalised groups intersect, intensifying their experiences of exclusion. The newest activist literature is highly enriched by feminist (Palomo-Domínguez, Jiménez-Marín, and Sánchez-

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<sup>109</sup> Many contributors of *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (2023), including Chidzey (2023), Reading (2023), consider the importance of intersectionality in memory activism.

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Gey Valenzuela 2023) and intersectional approaches (Serafini 2018; McCartney 2019; Funderburk 2021; Sholette 2022; Hannum and Pyun 2023; Sousa 2023)<sup>110</sup> and memory activist scholarship, including this research, tries to catch up:

The labor of memory is also gendered (Reading 2019) and indeed we should extend this to an intersectional understanding of memory labor that allows us to intervene into memory work to understand the complex ways in which particular pasts and histories continue: to be forgotten and erased and what and how activist memory work counteracts this advanced and non-conventional commemoration. (Reading 2023, 71)

Murphy's (2021b) selected cases demonstrate intersectionality. Firstly, both Pinkston and Šehović are women artists, which appears to be a notable departure from the norm in creating traditional monuments. Secondly, their artworks are gender-sensitive, meaning they are highly aware of gender identities, roles, and representations in artistic expression. While *Landmarked* is dedicated to African American women, ŠTO TE NEMA is inspired by the Bosniak women who lost their dear ones in the genocide. Although Western media used to portray the *Mothers of Srebrenica* as powerless and constantly weeping women, ŠTO TE NEMA (as well as *8372* and *My Thousand Year Old Land*) invites the public to consider the women's role as the leading actor in the post-conflict situation. Third, even though most Bosniaks were secular, during the Bosnian War (and often today), the Western media defined them as Bosnian Muslims, which alienated and labelled them, perpetuating stereotypes and contributing to their marginalisation within broader society (Mujanović 2023). In examining the experiences of Black women, *Landmarked* reveals that the simultaneous presence of two identities—that of a woman and that of an African American—has intensified their marginalisation and social disadvantage. Such employment of intersectionality in the context

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<sup>110</sup> It is interesting to note that in his book, artist and activist Sholette (2022, p. 12) also pays attention to monuments: "monuments commemorating white supremacy and colonialism are defaced, demolished and tagged with the names of Black, brown and poor citizens murdered by the police and military."

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of monumentality through art can potentially amplify marginalised voices and reshape rooted narratives to foster exclusion.

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Since its inception, memory studies have predominantly focused on cultural representations and content-encoding by specific memory agents. My research also examines the (re)presentations of the Srebrenica genocide transmitted by alternative commemorative art practices (see Chapter 6). Recently, there has been a call to examine memory agents' agency, structures, and networks (Wüstenberg and Sierp 2020). Consequently, I am investigating the agency of art creators in memory politics. Memory activism study framework blended with insights from activist scholarship allows me to explore initiators, participants, and their place in memory politics. However, there is a lack of impact analysis in memory studies that examine how publics perceive memory (art) work.<sup>111</sup> This research aims to contribute to this gap by examining the reception of alternative commemorative artworks and their impact on the audience (see Chapters 7–8).

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<sup>111</sup> However, there are some exceptions in memory studies that explore reception. For example Van de Putte's (2021) book *Contemporary Auschwitz/Oświęcim: An Interactional, Synchronic Approach to Collective Memory* examines how *thick communities* in contemporary Oświęcim (Poland) interpret Holocaust and Auschwitz memory. Similarly, Andersen Sindbæk and Borčak Wierød's (2022) article *Memory conflicts and memory grey zones: War memory in Bosnia–Herzegovina between public memory disputes, literary narratives and personal experience* explores the individual reception of literary works written by Bosnian diaspora in two different BiH entities: the Bosniak–Croat Federation and Republika Srpska.

## **4 Commemorating Srebrenica: From Traditional to Non-Conventional Practices**

This chapter examines the evolution of the Srebrenica genocide remembrance from its inception to the present day. It begins with an analysis of the traditional forms of commemoration practised at the local, regional and international levels, as well as the establishment of symbolism and *sites of memory*. Before discussing newly emerged non-traditional forms of remembrance, it is valuable to review how Srebrenica was and is remembered in conventional ways. Thus, the first section therefore focuses primarily on the first efforts to commemorate the genocide and the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, which has become the central institution for preserving the memory of the Srebrenica genocide. Further, the chapter continues with the emergence of non-traditional forms of remembrance, such as contemporary artworks, emphasising initiatives incorporating the coffee ritual in their remembrance practices. Therefore, the second section also examines the significance of the coffee ritual in Bosnian culture and its semiotics, highlighting the uniqueness of the selected artwork in the context of other initiatives.

### ***4.1 Traditional Commemoration of the Srebrenica Genocide***

Today, the 11th of July, the day of the Srebrenica genocide, is quite widely recognised and commemorated. However, this was not a spontaneous phenomenon; instead, it resulted from survivors' long-term campaigns, persistent efforts for recognition, lobbying, and foreign funding. Also, the first commemorations looked very different, given that the first part of the Srebrenica Memorial Centre—the sacral and the burial site—was inaugurated on 20 September 2003, and the memorial part opened only on 9 November 2007 (Sahovic 2019).

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This section reviews the Srebrenica genocide remembrance, focusing on traditional commemoration practices.

The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA, 1995) ended the Bosnian War, suspended hostilities, and brought a ceasefire to the country. To consolidate peace, the international community implemented some protective measures. First, heavy NATO troops were deployed to prevent violence and potential attacks, ensuring stability and security. Simultaneously, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) for Bosnia and Herzegovina was created to address civilian and governmental aspects of DPA, implementing political stability, governance mechanisms, and sustainable peace. In this way, the international community fostered “protectorate-like powers in BiH.” Such practice was necessary due to the ongoing tensions between ethnic groups, which differed in DPA interpretations and visions for the future (Sahovic 2019, 132). Despite these preventive measures, the post-conflict socio-political climate remained complicated and turbulent.

Ethnopolitical elites continued to stir up already divided communities, turning the Bosniak and Bosnian-Serb conflict into a war of memory. The memory of the Srebrenica genocide and its memorialisation became the main object of contention (Kuljić 2017; Sahovic 2019). Bosniaks who were expelled from Srebrenica and became the victims of genocide wanted justice, a dignified burial for the victims and official recognition of their recent suffering. The largest Bosniak party, the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), quickly seized the opportunity to mobilise its electorate by exploiting the grievance over Srebrenica (Sahovic 2019). In turn, Bosnian Serb politicians have launched a campaign of denial and focused exclusively on Bosnian Serb suffering by minimising the pain of the Bosniaks. In addition, anthropologist Haris Halilovich (2015) reveals how politicians, their ambitions and their presence at the annual commemorations often obscured the suffering of victims and survivors, reducing even their physical access to the Potočari Memorial site. The other relevant aspect highlighted by

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Halilovich (2015) is the instrumentalisation of victims' suffering by both sides: "Many other Srebrenica survivors have felt that their memory has been under double attack: from public denial, moral relativism and triumphalism by the Serb nationalists on the one side, and from the Bosniak nationalists, on the other, who use Srebrenica to generalise about the 'victimised Bosniak nation', attempting to turn Srebrenica into the main pillar – a memory site – of the new Bosniak nationalism" (Halilovich 2015, 97). Besides local and regional authorities, international politicians, including former US President Bill Clinton, also took the opportunity to use the Srebrenica tragedy for virtue signalling. On the one hand, the commemoration has become a 'genocide festival,' attracting foreign spectators, be they tourists or politicians (Halilovich 2015). On the other hand, it turned into the Golgotha of the entire Bosniak suffering, uniting Bosniaks from all over the country and diaspora in a collective annual pilgrimage. Halilovich (2015) claims that the memory of Srebrenica should primarily belong to those who directly experienced the genocide and their families, who seek to honour the victims. However, the question of who owns such memory is complex, as collective memory inevitably includes multiple perspectives and interests. And nevertheless, a significant labour of memory had to be done over the years to recognise the genocide and ensure that the victims were allowed to remember it properly.

Soon after the atrocities took place, the first Srebrenica victims' associations fighting for the rights of the survivors and justice began to emerge. One of the first associations, *Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves* (Udruženje Pokret Majke enklava Srebrenice i Žepe), was established in 1996 in Sarajevo (Pokret "Majke enklava Srebrenica i Žepa" 2019). In the beginning, the main objective of its activity was to find out what happened to their relatives who disappeared in July 1995. Therefore, the association mobilised protests in Sarajevo, expressing their rage and desire to know the fate of their dear ones (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 216). Similar associations were found in Tuzla (*Women of Srebrenica/Žene*

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*Srebrenice* founded 21 May 1996<sup>112</sup>) and Srebrenica (*Mothers of Srebrenica/Majke Srebrenice*). Since January 1996, women have been organising protests in Tuzla (Remembering Srebrenica 2020), the city where the majority of refugees were displaced following the genocide. They soon introduced the practice of gathering and protesting on the 11th day of every month in the Tuzla centre, demanding a search for relatives and the punishment of those responsible (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 239). Also, the *Women of Srebrenica* played an essential role in participating in ICTY work and BiH's judicial processes (Remembering Srebrenica 2020) and promoting the idea of establishing a global anti-war centre (Sahovic 2019). The formation of associations, their protests and the struggle for justice laid the foundations for the memory of activism (Jaugaitė 2024a), genocide recognition and memory preservation.

Considering the security concerns, the initial commemoration could not be held in or around Srebrenica. Srebrenica was geographically situated within the territory of Republika Srpska, hostile towards Bosniak victims; thus, it became challenging to prevent potential attacks. The perpetrators of the genocide were not only at large but also in positions of power, such as mayors and heads of police departments. They were preventing women from Srebrenica and hundreds of thousands of other refugees from returning home (Hunt 2005). Until 1999, victims and survivors did not have access to mourn their killed relatives in Srebrenica (Sahovic 2019). In 1998 and 1999, they were only permitted a brief visit to the site of the Dutchbat compound (a former battery factory) escorted by international armed forces (Mihajlović Trbovc 2014, 239; Sahovic 2019). Therefore, the first commemorations of the fall of Srebrenica were held in Tuzla, where most of the refugees from Srebrenica and the surrounding areas settled.

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<sup>112</sup> Nura Begović, email to the author with *Women of Srebrenica* association's biography attached, May 5, 2024.



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Former US ambassador to Austria (1993–1997), academic, activist and philanthropist Swanee Hunt's (2005) essay documents the problematic situation and the struggle for the first commemoration in 1996. Hunt describes the harsh conditions that around 30,000 refugees experienced following their expulsion from the territories seized by the Bosnian Serb Army and their desire to come back home. Thousands of people were still missing as numerous mass graves had yet to be discovered, and many women were unwilling to accept that their loved ones were dead. Upon witnessing the women's anguish, desolation and anger, Ambassador Hunt travelled to Tuzla intending to provide support to the refugees affected by the genocide. She facilitated the organisation of the first commemoration, which took place at the sports centre. Hunt sought to mobilise influential women worldwide to advocate for the Srebrenica women's and other refugees' right to return home, ensuring survivors did not feel isolated. Thus, empowerment leaders and advocates like Queen Noor of Jordan, European Commissioner Emma Bonino and Laura Bonaparte, one of the founders of the *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*,<sup>113</sup> also came and expressed their support for mothers who lost their families and promised to assist in their struggle. The mothers from Srebrenica also welcomed the mothers of perpetrators, recognising their shared identity as mothers (Hunt 2005).

From the first commemoration in 1996, politicians began to exploit the tragedy of Srebrenica as a political instrument: by giving his speech, Ejup Ganić, the president of BiH at that time and a member of SDA, started ethnic mobilisation of victims and survivors (Sahovic 2019). Subsequently, these agitations intensified, diverting attention from the victims and their pain towards political agendas. Political scientist Dzenan Sahovic (2019, 128) identifies “the political organisation of Srebrenica survivors and their return” process as the first phase of Srebrenica remembrance and memory politics in BiH. According to Sahovic (2019, 128),

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<sup>113</sup> Once again, the phenomenon of a *multidirectional memory* (Rothberg 2009) can be observed: the leader of the Argentine human rights movement for the recovery of relatives who were forcibly disappeared during the military dictatorship visits the survivors of the Srebrenica genocide, whose relatives are also missing.

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later, the focus shifted to “the burial ceremonies and politicisation of the commemoration day.” However, politicians sought to exploit the Srebrenica question from the outset and intensified their efforts subsequently.

In 2000, as the local Bosniak population of Srebrenica slowly began to return home and security measures were implemented, the commemoration location was relocated from Tuzla to Potočari. “Thousands of women came to the site in the year 2000 and a heavy security apparatus had to be put in place to guarantee their security and the security of the visiting international dignitaries” (Sahovic 2019, 147). RS authorities ignored the commemoration; meanwhile, local representatives held a protest and mocked the events. However, the first commemoration at the site of the atrocities was an achievement that laid the foundations for the construction of the Memorial Centre (Sahovic 2019). According to Sahovic (2019), the fifth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide initiated the institutionalisation of the Potočari site as the primary venue for mourning and remembrance.<sup>114</sup>

The creation of the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre and Cemetery became a protracted process. Such a complex was essential to provide a physical location for the collective burial and commemoration of the victims of the genocide, as well as for the commemoration of their memory. The OHR had to intervene as internal political processes were protracted due to Bosnian Serbs’ disagreements. On 25 October 2000, OHR issued the ‘Decision on the Location of a Cemetery and the Monument for the Victims of Srebrenica,’ referring to Potočari, which did not please the Bosnian Serb side but was the priority for the genocide survivors. As Sahovic (2019, 137) explains, “[t]he Memorial Centre in Potočari was recognised, shaped, and practically established through two more OHR’s decisions, “The Decision Establishing and Registering the Foundation of the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial

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<sup>114</sup> As happened with the Holocaust over time (Pisanty 2020; Perra 2021), the memory of Srebrenica entered an institutional phase, i.e. the Memorial Centre began to determine the discourse on the Srebrenica genocide.

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Centre and Cemetery” and “The Decision Ordering the Transfer of Ownership of the Battery Factory to the Foundation of the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial and Cemetery. The role of the International Community remained significant once the site was established.” The OHR ensured that the complex was under the jurisdiction of Bosnia and Herzegovina rather than that of Republika Srpska to protect Srebrenica survivors from any potential threats. Its construction started in 2001. However, the process has been prolonged due to disputes between Bosniak and Bosnian Serb elites, technicalities and a failure to absorb funds properly (Sahovic 2019). The memorial and burial site were finally inaugurated on 20 September 2003. Concurrently, Ambassador Hunt donated Tarik Samarah’s photography collection, which became the inaugural art exhibition at the Memorial Centre.

Once the burial site had been established, the annual tradition of burying the remains of found and identified victims commenced. While the initial commemorations sought to ascertain the fate of the men and boys, subsequent commemorations concentrated on the burials (Sahovic 2019). “The commemorations in subsequent years were strongly connected to the burial of the victims. As mass-graves were found and excavated, the victims were identified and transported to Srebrenica for burial, often during the annual collective burial ceremonies on 11 July” (Sahovic 2019, 148). Also, Sahovic (2019, 148) highlights the Islamic aspect of commemorations, which was previously absent: “The very strong Islamic influence in the burial ceremonies is worth noticing as Bosnia, a part of formerly socialist Yugoslavia, used to be a very secular society. It is possible that many of the dead were not practi[s]ing Muslims and would most likely have been buried in a more non-confessional manner if done privately.” The BiH Islamic community ‘Islamised’ the Srebrenica tragedy and many survivors view it negatively as it distorts the memory of their loved ones:

Our politicians from Sarajevo expect us – and I think it’s a general perception of us [Srebrenica] survivors – to be more nationalistic, more religious, more patriotic, but all they really do for us is to come here once a year to talk about our tragedy like it was

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their own. They say ‘our Muslim brothers were killed here’, but they were not really their brothers, they were our brothers. Most of my relatives weren’t religious at all... When it comes to helping people to return to Srebrenica, to live here again, they’ve done a bare minimum ... It seems that for them we are of more value dead than alive. (Halilovich 2015, p. 96, citing a survivor Asim)

It is worth considering the more profound implications of these collective funerals, encoded with religious mythology, ritual and language. Herzfeld’s (2019) article explores the relationship between religion and nationalism and the dangers of religious nationalism. He investigates whether the war instrumentalised religion for nationalism or whether nationalism became an instrument of religion. Contrary to viral stereotypes of an extremist Islamic revival, Herzfeld concludes that the turn to religion after the war was a temporary phenomenon that led to disappointment in religion eventually: “The loss of trust in religion, of a spiritual anchor, is perhaps the greatest tragedy of the religio-nationalist link.” Herzfeld claims that Bosniaks have learned their lesson on the dangers of religious nationalism and are slowly moving forward.

Another part of the complex, the remembrance chamber integrated into the former battery factory, which was transformed into the Dutchbat base, where Srebrenica refugees sought asylum, was opened on 9 November 2007. The “Memorial Room–Personal Stories”<sup>115</sup> was the former permanent exhibition featuring 20 personal items of genocide victims recovered from mass graves, highlighting the individuality of genocide victims (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021a). These belongings, once owned by the victims, helped humanise and personalise their suffering. The memorial room also included the *Black Box*,<sup>116</sup> which displayed a short documentary about what happened in July 1995, produced by Leslie

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<sup>115</sup> This exhibition was still there when I visited the Memorial Centre in August 2022, but Bosnian friends have recently confirmed that it is no longer there and that it is being updated (the exhibition actually looked rather outdated and amateurish, so it was time for refurbishing). It should be mentioned that I tried several times to contact the Srebrenica Memorial Centre through various channels to ask about the exhibition development. Unfortunately, I did not receive any answers or help.

<sup>116</sup> As far as I understand, the *Black Box* is no longer there either.

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Woodhead and Muhamed Mujkić (Sahovic 2019; van den Berg and Hoondert 2020).

Although Sahovic's (2019) article provides a brilliant and detailed account of the evolution of the complex and political tensions, he does not mention another permanent exhibition, "Failure of the International Community," which opened on 9 February 2017 in renovated UN Dutch Battalion headquarters (van den Berg and Hoondert 2020; Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021a). As the title indicates, the exhibition focuses on the failure of the international community, particularly the UN peacekeeping forces, to protect the 'safe zone' in July 1995. The exhibition encompasses 26 restored rooms used by the Dutch compound in 1994-1995. Dion van den Berg's and Martin J.M. Hoondert's (2020) article reveals lengthy negotiations between genocide survivors, Dutch officials, and veterans regarding the exhibition. Also, it considers the idea of plural truths and multiple narratives in this exhibition, museum and beyond.

As the number of unburied victims decreases,<sup>117</sup> the official commemoration slowly enters the third "post-burial ceremonies period," Sahovic (2019) notes. Once the number of unburied victim remains has reached zero, it will be necessary to reconsider how the commemoration will take place. Sahovic (2019) considers two potential ways of further development:

On the one hand, the unresolved political conflicts between the ethnic groups might lead to an even deeper conflict of narratives about victimhood in Eastern Bosnia and an even stronger sense of Bošnjak nationalism in the yearly commemoration ceremonies. On the other hand, the passage of time and an improved political situation might slowly lead to a change of meaning of the site, moving closer to the originally envisioned idea of a site of remembrance, reconciliation, and education. (Sahovic 2019, 152)

From my observations, the Memorial Centre seems to follow the latter path. The Srebrenica Memorial Centre has significantly changed over time, including its management. The arrival

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<sup>117</sup> By 11 July 2023, 6,640 bodies had been buried at Potočari and other sites (when relatives preferred to bury victims separately) (International Commission on Missing Persons 2023). This indicates that the majority of the remains have already been interred. Therefore, the number of burials is declining annually. Some remains (or portions thereof) have yet to be identified. Unfortunately, some of the bodies will never be discovered.

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of a new director, Emir Suljagić,<sup>118</sup> in 2019 positively impacted the Centre and its agenda.

Drawing on the experience of other museums and research centres, Suljagić and Hasan Hasanović, the Head of Oral History at Memorial Centre, seek to apply best practices and methodologies in their work.<sup>119</sup> *The Lives Behind the Fields of Death/Životi iza polja smrti* is one example the Memorial Centre and BIRN (the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) curated. It is a project of oral history that portrays the testimonies of 100 survivors and witnesses of the Srebrenica genocide.<sup>120</sup> Besides the above-mentioned permanent exhibitions, the former battery factory hosts other related exhibitions, including art. During my first visit in August 2022, I recorded the following exhibitions: 1) a number of photographic exhibitions (exhibited photographs by Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Rod Nordland and Paul Lowe) depicting the most iconic images of the Bosnian War, including the events in Srebrenica, 2) Sadik Salimović's photo exhibition *A Picture though time/Slikom kroz vrijeme* organised by the *Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves*, 3) the *ArchiWar* illustration exhibition by Serbian artist Jelena Jaćimović, inspired by survivors' testimonies, 4) the exhibition *In the footsteps of those who did (not) cross/Koracima onih koji (ni)su prešli*, dedicated to the *Death March* and the people who escaped (or tried to escape) from Srebrenica by walking more than 100 km through the forests, across enemy lines, to the free territory of Tuzla (see section 2.1), 5) illustration Exhibition *Warning/Opomena* by Sarajevo artist Nermina Memić, 6) photo exhibition *Mother's Scarf/Majčina marama*<sup>121</sup> based on

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<sup>118</sup> Emir Suljagić is the Srebrenica genocide survivor. As a journalist, he has been active in the fight for human rights from the very beginning of his career. Suljagić holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Hamburg. Also, he has authored several book and articles on Srebrenica genocide.

<sup>119</sup> Hasanović shared his experience at the Srebrenica Youth School, which I attended in the summer of 2023. He also is a genocide survivor, who dedicated his life to informing others about what happened in July 1995.

<sup>120</sup> The testimonies and the documentary about the filming are broadcast on the TV screens in the Memorial Centre. Also, the project is accessible online at <https://zivotiizapoljasmrti.srebrenicamemorial.org/en> (accessed 5 May 2024).

<sup>121</sup> The scarfs play a symbolic role as an everyday item of Bosniak women. Simultaneously, they are used during the prayer and remembrance of the killed relatives. World women leaders also donated scarfs for the exhibition to express solidarity with Bosniak women (Angell 2022).

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installation<sup>122</sup> dedicated to the women of Srebrenica who had to face the genocide and bury their loved ones, and 7) the exhibition recreating the canteen of the DutchBat. These art exhibitions introduce alternative formats that complement the traditional museum approach, offering diverse perspectives: journalistic accounts, individual experiences of survival and loss, women's narratives, and the historical perspective of Dutch peacekeepers. In this way, they present a multifaceted and emotionally resonant view of the Srebrenica genocide, enriching visitors' understanding of both the events and their impact. During my second visit in July 2023, I also visited a new memorial room (opened in 2022 (Dizdarević Tahmišćija 2022)) in the UN Dutch Battalion headquarters that I missed last time. The exhibition is part of *The Lives Behind the Fields of Death* project, and it displays the victims' personal items that their relatives donated. In this manner, victims communicate through their relationship with the once-owned objects. As one could guess, seeing all that Memorial Centre offers takes some time. Not all exhibitions are permanent; indeed, most of them are temporary. Thus, every visit may generate new impressions.

So, the Memorial Centre seems to be reverting to its original concept of education and genocide prevention as intended by founding women's associations such as *Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves* and *Women of Srebrenica*. It offers sight tours and pursues various projects and events in cooperation with civil society and different partners. Moreover, the current Centre also deals with documentation and preservation; it conducts oral history recordings and research. Finally, the Centre represents the voices of survivors and fights for the broader recognition of the Srebrenica genocide. Recently, the Memorial Centre has firmly advocated for the adoption of the UN Resolution on genocide in Srebrenica to designate 11 July as the International Remembrance and Reflection Day of the Genocide in Srebrenica.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> This installation was arranged to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide inside and outside the battery factory in 2022.

<sup>123</sup> See the Memorial Centre official page @SrebrenicaMC on X social media platform (accessed 6 May 2024).



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In 2007, following the verdict of ICJ, High Representative Christian Schwartz-Schilling asked the United Nations to recognise the Srebrenica Remembrance Day (Security Council 2007). In turn, the United States government, on various levels, passed resolutions to remember Srebrenica's victims and condemn the genocide; however, most countries ignored this request. Therefore, on January 15, 2009, the European Parliament proclaimed July 11 Srebrenica Genocide Commemoration Day, encouraging other European parliaments to act accordingly (Mulaj 2017). On May 23, 2024, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) approved the Resolution on Srebrenica and declared 11 July the Srebrenica Genocide Remembrance Day (Nichols and Sito-Sucic 2024). Hopefully, it will strengthen the importance of international law and promote 11 July internationally as a yearly commemoration in all countries. Although UNGA resolutions are recommendatory and do not legally bind member states, they carry significant political and moral weight (Sarajevo Times 2024). This resolution should disarm the denialist policy of Republika Srpska and put an end to the glorification of the genocide.

Referring back to Sahovic's (2019) remark about two possible paths for the future development of Srebrenica commemorations, the situation may not be as straightforward and simple as choosing one path or the other. While the current Memorial Centre seem to embrace "the idea of a site of remembrance, reconciliation, and education" (Sahovic 2019, 152), manifestations of Bosniak nationalism that use the Srebrenica genocide and the suffering it caused as a tool of discord and division persist in BiH. Such manifestations mainly occur in the realms of politics, media narrative framing, cultural sphere and education. As discussed in Chapter 2, ethnopolitical mobilisation begins in educational institutions and continues throughout all aspects of life. The forgers of the ethnopolitical Bosniak narrative tend to equate the suffering of the Srebrenica victims with that of an entire nation, eliminating the suffering of other groups. Consequently, Bosniak parties employ the tragedy as a means



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of mobilising voters in a targeted manner, although most politicians appear indifferent to the future of Srebrenica town. Therefore, “[t]he Bosniak nationalistic ideology adds a different dimension to the suffering: it instrumentalises the suffering as to create a sense of victimhood that becomes part of the national identity” (Bosscher 2018, 29).<sup>124</sup> Such a phenomenon is primarily determined by the DPA, which legitimises the power of three ethnopolitical elites, turning into the practice of ethnoreligious nationalism. It is laudable that the Memorial Centre does not espouse a purely ethnopolitical stance.<sup>125</sup> However, resisting the prevailing political climate is challenging, and commemorations can suddenly go in a completely different direction. Furthermore, the potential for the emergence of alternative ethno-nationalist and ethno-religious commemorations raises a concern. In response to Sahovic’s (2019) article, not only one or another but also two parallel paths may emerge simultaneously.

### 4.2 Towards Non-Conventional Forms of Remembrance

Place is considered one of the main components of identity rhetoric (Zerubavel 2003b, 42). Therefore, it is unsurprising that physical locations are often the first *sites of memory* that come to mind. However, when Pierre Nora discusses *sites of memory* (fr. *lieux de mémoire*), he refers to a much broader definition than just physical places of remembrance (Nora 1989; Erll 2011a, 23). What, then, are the other memory sites of the Srebrenica genocide? To illustrate the most significant *lieux de mémoire*, I dedicate this section and have created a table to visualise them (see Fig. 4.1). While the explored Memorial Centre<sup>126</sup> provides a stable *place* of remembrance and hosts a memorial-cemetery complex where the atrocities occurred, this research spotlights the nomadic, unstable, and bottom-up initiatives that create

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<sup>124</sup> The author found Floris Bosscher’s Bachelor thesis (2018) to be of a high standard and worthy of citation.

<sup>125</sup> Again, van den Berg and Hoondert’s (2020) article raises challenging and complex nuances. One such issue is how to represent the idea of multiple narratives, including the perpetrators’, in the context of genocide denial.

<sup>126</sup> The current Memorial Centre additionally realises various digital projects that are accessible to the global audience, thus, acquiring some unconventional qualities of remembrance.

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additional *space* to remember the victims of Srebrenica. These initiatives may transcend borders, elevating the memory of Srebrenica to a transnational level.

Nonetheless, discussing a few more physical *sites of memory* in addition to the Memorial Centre is unavoidable. First is the photo *Gallery 11/07/95/Galerija 11/07/95*, which serves as as Memorial Centre's branch in Sarajevo. Getting to the Memorial Centre in Potočari could be complex and take several hours. Hence, *Gallery 11/07/95* in the capital city of Sarajevo offers quicker access to what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995. *Gallery 11/07/95* depicts what happened and how the events were represented in various discourses of memory, blending artistic and documentary genres (Björkdahl and Kappler 2019, 396). Also, regarding the physical memorials, mentioning many memorials to Srebrenica in other countries is essential. Landskrona (Sweden), Haan (Germany), Aalborg (Denmark), Piancamuno (Italy), Windsor (Canada), Kartal (Istanbul, Turkey), Borås (Sweden), and Derby (the UK) have set up memorials for the victims of Srebrenica.<sup>127</sup> These memorials follow the tone set by the Memorial Centre and mention the established number of 8,372 victims. This figure refers to the (non-final) number of victims officially registered and engraved on the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial plaque, situated close to another plaque bearing the victims' names. 8,372 became an iconic number and symbol of the Srebrenica genocide. However, the exact figure is unknown due to the ongoing process of exhumation and identification of bodies. ICTY and ICJ indicated that some 'more than 8000' victims were killed during the genocide. Finally, archives (e.g., The Srebrenica Memorial Centre archive and ICTY archive) can also be classified as physical *lieux de mémoire*.

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<sup>127</sup> I have learnt about memorials through @BosnianHistory verified account on X social media and about the one in Derby from Aida Salkić Haughton MBE.

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The major Srebrenica genocide <i>sites of memory</i>
<b>Physical sites of memory</b>
Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide
<i>Galerija 11/07/95</i> in Sarajevo
Srebrenica memorials abroad
<b>Commemorative rituals and ceremonies</b>
Commemoration at Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide
<i>Women in Black</i> participation
<i>Marš Mira/Peace March</i>
Marathons (Bicycle marathon Bihać–Srebrenica, Ultramarathon Bihać–Srebrenica, Motomarathon and Ultramarathon Vukovar–Srebrenica)
Public readings of the victims' names
Commemorations in diaspora
<b>Digital Remembrance</b>
Broadcasting commemoration online and separate commemorative online events
#Hashtag memory activism on social media
Virtual exhibitions (such as <i>Faces of Srebrenica</i> )
<b>Slogans</b>
<i>Never Forget Srebrenica</i>
<b>Symbols</b>
Mothers of Srebrenica
Srebrenica flower
Green coffins
White Headstones
Number 8,372
Blue Butterfly (lat. <i>Polyommatus icarus</i> )
<i>Fildžani</i> : traditional coffee cups
<b>Education</b>
<i>Remembering Srebrenica</i> (since 2013)
Srebrenica Youth School (since 2020)
<b>Documentation and archives</b>
The Srebrenica Genocide Memorial Centre archive and oral history projects
ICTY archive
<b>Art</b>
<b>Films</b> (such as <i>A Cry from the Grave</i> (1999) by Leslie Woodheid, <i>The Fog of Srebrenica</i> (2015) by Samir Mehanović and <i>Quo Vadis, Aida?</i> (2020) by Jasmila Zbanić)
<b>Photography</b>
<b>Installations</b> (such as <i>Mother's Scarf/Majčina marama</i> )
<b>Illustrative art</b> (e.g., <i>Warning/Opomena</i> and <i>ArchiWar</i> )
<b>Performance art and theatre</b> (8372, <i>My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)</i> and <i>You are not here for coffee/Nema te na kahvi</i> )
<b>Non-traditional monuments</b> (the best example is the nomadic monument ŠTO TE NEMA)

Figure 4.1: The major Srebrenica genocide *sites of memory*, created by the author

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Besides the discussed collective annual funeral, the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial commemoration includes other essential rituals and traditions. One of these is *The March of Peace/Marš Mira*—an annual three-day (8-10 July) peace walk of around 100 km to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. The march symbolically replicates the *Death March*, evoking Bosniaks' attempts to flee to the ARBiH-held territory of Tuzla in July 1995 (see Chapter 2: section 2.1). After a challenging trek through mountainous terrain, participants arrive in Potočari to participate in the annual commemoration on July 11. One should also mention the popular marathons that take place in the region, including the Bicycle Marathon Bihać–Srebrenica, the Ultramarathon Bihać–Srebrenica, the Motomarathon and the Ultramarathon Vukovar–Srebrenica. Another significant group annually coming to the Potočari is *Women in Black*: a feminist, antiwar and antimilitarist peace organisation from Belgrade, which has operated since 1991. Every July 10, *Women in Black* activists organise an alternative commemoration in Belgrade, and the following day, since 2002, they come to Potočari to show their solidarity with women from Srebrenica,<sup>128</sup> making their antiwar statement (Remembering Srebrenica 2018; Fridman 2022, 71–95).

Another common tradition observed in communities that have experienced atrocities and human loss is the reading of the victims' names in public. This practice serves multiple purposes, including the act of remembering the victims and paying respects, as well as the humanisation of the victims (who are often reduced to mere numbers) and the raising of awareness and education. Additionally, it provides a cathartic experience for survivors and relatives. In the case of Srebrenica, different organisers usually arrange such readings. The Memorial Centre appears as the main initiator of such action. In July 2020, during the global pandemic, the Centre launched online readings that could include Bosnian diaspora members

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<sup>128</sup> The first time *Women in Black* met women of Srebrenica was in Tuzla in October 1995 (Remembering Srebrenica 2018). Since then, they started the collaboration.

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and foreign organisations. Fridman and Gensburger (2023, 41) remark that such practice was “modeled after the Yad Vashem commemorative practice, [which] also went online.”

Additionally, the Memorial Centre organised a virtual exhibition, *Reading for Srebrenica /Čitanje za Srebrenicu* (Srebrenica Memorial Centre 2021c).<sup>129</sup> Other organisers may also host such readings. For instance, on 30 June 2023, I observed one of the readings in the centre of Tuzla, which students from the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Tuzla organised.

Commemorations within the diaspora play a significant role in the Srebrenica commemoration landscape (Karabegović 2014, 2019). In terms of its influence and visibility, one significant undertaking that merits particular attention is the *Remembering Srebrenica* project. It is a charitable initiative in the UK that promotes Srebrenica Memorial Day, organises various events (in person and remotely) and educates the UK society about the consequences of hate and intolerance since 2013. In addition to remembering Srebrenica and releasing education programmes, the initiative contributes to growing new leaders who stand against discrimination and intolerance in their communities (Remembering Srebrenica 2014).

With the emergence of the internet, commemorative practices, like many other spheres of life, have gone online also. However, the first online commemorations<sup>130</sup> and events to honour the deceased appeared in the 1990s, both in situations of crisis and in ordinary circumstances. The global pandemic of 2020 has accelerated this trend even further.

Considering the complex epidemiological situation, physical access to the annual 25th

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<sup>129</sup> For some reason, I could not access it (the videos on YouTube seem to be no longer available) but the Centre claims such exhibition exist.

<sup>130</sup> Online initiatives commemorating the Srebrenica genocide existed prior to the pandemic. One of the most notable examples is the virtual exhibition, *Faces of Srebrenica*, launched by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in 2015. The exhibition presents a collection of images depicting the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, reminding the viewer that these were people, not just numbers.

Access to the exhibition (accessed on 14/5/2024): <https://www.rferl.org/a/27114531.html>.

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Srebrenica commemoration became highly limited to family members of the victims. The organisers instructed the officials to deliver their speeches via video messages or address the audience online. Peace March and the marathons were allowed only following epidemiological requirements (Al Jazeera 2020). Consequently, the commemoration became relatively modest in scale, yet the internet streaming<sup>131</sup> has reached a broader audience. Aside from the commemoration, other online events were organised. Those who wished to contribute to the commemoration of the victims not only by observing, but by taking action, became involved in digital memory activism, which gained momentum that year (Jaugaitė 2024a). Even if #hashtag memory activism passes as a complimentary practice of onsite commemoration (Fridman 2022), it makes the entire commemoration even more accessible, inclusive and transnational.

As different kinds of artworks can evoke and preserve collective memories, they can also be considered *sites of memory*. Several works of art have already been mentioned when discussing the Memorial Centre's exhibitions. Given their vast quantity, it is not easy to list all the works of art focusing on Srebrenica. However, it would be valuable to discuss a few films that tell the story of the Srebrenica genocide and serve as invaluable repositories of memory. *A Cry from the Grave* (1999) by Leslie Woodhead is a widespread, high-quality documentary film also shown at the Memorial Centre. This film was one of the first to depict what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995. It documents the fall of Srebrenica by combining eyewitness video materials and interviews with victims, peacekeepers, and high officials. Not by chance, the ICTY employed *A Cry from the Grave* as a reliable source of information for

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<sup>131</sup> It is important to note that streaming or broadcasting the Srebrenica commemoration in 2020 was not a new phenomenon. "In 2006, courtesy of Bosnian satellite NTV Hayat, displaced Bosnians across the globe could watch the burial ceremony at Potočari live in their new homes and, in this way, vicariously participate in a transnational mourning" (Halilovich 2015, 25).

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the trials (The Independent 2008). Also, the film won many international awards.<sup>132</sup> In recent years, *A Cry from the Grave* has been overshadowed by another award-winning feature film, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (2020) by Jasmila Žbanić, which soon became an internationally acknowledged hit.<sup>133</sup> Žbanić's film tells the story of a woman translator, Aida, who unsuccessfully attempts to save her family from the upcoming genocide.<sup>134</sup> Through Aida's perspective, *Quo Vadis, Aida?* depicts the final moments of a UN refugee shelter, emphasising the unsuccessful attempts of Western powers (particularly the Dutch battalion) to prevent the genocide and the seizure of the camp by the Bosnian Serb army. Žbanić's film was never released in Republika Srpska. No official ban was applied, but cinema owners were afraid to release the film, according to Žbanić (2020). In order to maintain nationalist unanimity, ethno-nationalist elites control cinemas, theatres, media, schools, associations, and all state institutions (Žbanić 2020; Jaugaitė 2024b). Nevertheless, internet film platforms bypass such restrictions. The only question remains whether the film is seen by those who should watch it. Another less-known film is Samir Mehanović's *The Fog of Srebrenica* (2015). This documentary gives voice to Srebrenica survivors, who share painful memories about life in their hometown after the atrocities took place. Interestingly, the film's title immediately catches the eye of anyone interested in the Holocaust and/or cinema studies as it simply reminds one of the first and the best documentary films on the Holocaust, *Night and Fog/Nuit et Brouillard* (1956) by Alain Resnais.

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<sup>132</sup> *A Cry from the Grave* (1999) won at least 5 international awards, including the Special Jury Award at the 12th International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, Grand Prize and Banff Rockie Award at the 21st Banff Television Festival. (Information from IMDb website: <https://m.imdb.com/title/tt0225448/awards/>).

<sup>133</sup> *Quo vadis, Aida?* (2020) became extremely popular across the globe. It was nominated for Oscar at Academy Awards, USA (2021) and two BAFTA Film Awards (2021). Film was also awarded in other prestigious film festivals (information from IMDb website: [https://m.imdb.com/title/tt8633462/awards/?ref=tt\\_awd](https://m.imdb.com/title/tt8633462/awards/?ref=tt_awd)).

<sup>134</sup> Interestingly, *Quo vadis, Aida?* is actually inspired by the book *Under the UN Flag: The International Community and the Srebrenica Genocide*, a story experienced and written by translator Hasan Nuhanović, who tragically lost his family members in a similar manner as depicted in the film. Žbanić and Nuhanović initially planned to collaborate on set, but disagreement led Žbanić to portray a fictional female character instead (Cooke 2021; Karčić 2021).



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Another category of *lieux de mémoire* is deeply embedded symbols and slogans that represent the Srebrenica genocide. Since the very beginning, the mothers of Srebrenica became the most iconic symbol of the Srebrenica genocide. The genocide mainly took the lives of men, leaving women as the primary mourners of their relatives and catalysts for further action. Although the Western media often depicted the mothers of Srebrenica as weeping and desperate women, as previously mentioned, they soon assumed an active role in genocide recognition, forming various associations for truth, justice and equal rights.



**Figure 4.2: The Srebrenica flower pin given to the author by the BosFam organisation.** Author's picture from the Srebrenica Memorial on 11 July 2023



**Figure 4.3: The Srebrenica flower from TRT News Instagram post, 11 July 2021**

The Srebrenica flower (Fig. 4.2 and 4.3) is another widely recognised deliberately crafted symbol of the Srebrenica genocide, but few know the story of this symbol. The author of the flower is Jasmina Čamdžić, a woman from Pula (Croatia) who immigrated to Gračanica in BiH, where she joined the association *Gračaničko keranje* that promotes the traditional Bosnian craft of lace crochet. In this artisan association, Čamdžić met Muslim leader and Grand Mufti of BiH Mustafa Cerić, who came up with the idea of creating the crochet flower to represent the suffering in Srebrenica. Cerić's idea was to include white and green



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colours,<sup>135</sup> representing innocence and hope, and to reflect the symbolism of 11, referring to 11 July 1995.<sup>136</sup> Čamdžić created several designs to embody Cerić's idea, but the sample flower with 11 petals and a green centre was eventually selected. In 2011, such Srebrenica flowers were distributed for the first time and received very well (Bagar 2019). Furthermore, this flower also became the design of the *Remembering Srebrenica* initiative (Fig. 4.4). In 2015, graphic designer Enes Klopčić developed his version of the design (Fig. 4.5) (Imago Mundi Collection 2015), combining the symbols of the Srebrenica flower and the Srebrenica mothers into one. Klopčić's version depicts a green coffin,<sup>137</sup> which the mothers dressed in white surround emotionally and physically touching as they mourn. Gradually, this flower became a well-known symbol of the Srebrenica genocide. Nowadays, people wear such floral pins on the left side of their clothing (near the heart) to raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide and during commemorative occasions in July.



**Figure 4.4:** The logo of the UK-based charity *Remembering Srebrenica*



**Figure 4.5:** Reimagined Srebrenica flower by artist Enes Klopčić

<sup>135</sup> White and green are also among the fundamental colours in Islamic culture.

<sup>136</sup> The flower could also be a reference to the architecture of Potočari Cemetery, which also looks like half a flower and has five petals.

<sup>137</sup> Wooden coffins covered with green burial cloth and white marble headstones at Potočari cemetery are two other famous symbols travelling worldwide. Photography played a significant role by overspreading the iconic images of the coffins laid out in the former battery factory before the burial and the vast Potočari cemetery with thousands of white tombstones.

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Interestingly, the blue butterfly (lat. *Polyommatus icarus*) appears as one more essential symbol of the Srebrenica genocide. Forensic archaeologists observed that the blue butterfly was attracted to the blossoming of mugwort (lat. *Artemisia vulgaris*), which flourished following the absorption of minerals from human remains into the soil (Ljuca 2022). Therefore, this butterfly assisted scientists in discovering the unknown mass graves and bringing the first evidence to ICTY (Independent 2004). During my digital research on Twitter (Jaugaitė 2024a), I observed that individuals had posted images of blue butterflies to commemorate the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. Also, the commemorative slogan ‘Never Forget Srebrenica’ and the same hashtag were frequent among people commemorating online. It is evident that this slogan departs from the Holocaust’s ‘Never Again’ and its adoption beyond the Holocaust, as seen with examples such as Argentina’s ‘Nunca más,’ followed by a report uncovering crimes of Argentina’s military dictatorship or the application of the ‘Never Again’ slogan for the Rwanda Genocide.

My previous research also revealed that traditional coffee cups (bcs. *fildžani*) used in the ŠTO TE NEMA project established themselves as a new recognisable symbol in the Srebrenica commemoration landscape and “became the unofficial face of Srebrenica remembrance in digital mourning practises” (Jaugaitė 2024a, 19) and beyond. Artist Aida Šehović has chosen *fildžani* and traditional coffee rituals to highlight the absence of victims’ presence in the world of the living and remember the Srebrenica genocide in this non-conventional but very intimate way. In the Balkans, drinking coffee brings people together, serving as an essential ritual of gathering and sharing life with somebody for an hour or two (or even a few). Following ŠTO TE NEMA imagery, a few other initiatives (8372, *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* and *You’re not here for coffee/Nema te na kahvi*) also employed the coffee rituals and coffee to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide. As I demonstrated, the Srebrenica commemorative landscape is vast and cumulative; thus, this research focuses on a

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fascinating segment of commemorative practices that utilise the coffee custom to honour the genocide victims. Before thoroughly examining each of the selected initiatives, discussing the significance of coffee within the Bosnian and Balkan context is imperative.

### 4.2.1 Coffee as Carrier of Cultural Memory: Unpacking the Meaning and Significance of Coffee in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans

*Coffee and its drinking remain in these lands [Balkans, post-Yugoslav space] the most powerful symbols of friendship, maintaining relationships, conversation, rebuilding community, as well as forgiveness.* Tanja Petrović (2016)<sup>138</sup>

In the Balkans, drinking *bosanska ili turska kahva* (Bosnian or Turkish coffee) is a meaningful and extended custom that occupies a significant part of everyday life. Coffee appears to be more than just a beverage but a social tradition deeply rooted in culture and history. In BiH, it is common to meet friends and family members for coffee to catch up on the latest news while enjoying a warm, strong drink, often served with a glass of water and a sugar cube, Turkish delight or other sweet. Drinking coffee means being together and sharing your joys, worries and quality time. Even when a close person passes away, it is acceptable to set an empty cup for him or her: the relatives sometimes pour coffee in it, offering a drink to the dead. That means that the person is remembered and missed. One of the interviewees remarked that this ritual originates from the Old Bosnian Church, which included numerous paganistic elements, and some managed to survive Islamisation. This motif of an ancient tradition remains vibrant and evident in contemporary popular culture. For instance, the 1997 song, *Fildžan viška* (en. *A Cup to Spare*), by the Bosnian rock band *Zabranjeno Pušenje* (en. *No Smoking*) persists as one of the most popular songs in BiH. Consequently, drinking coffee together has become a fundamental social practice in the region.

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<sup>138</sup> Quotation for the postcard in the book. My translation from Slovenian with Petrović's clarification.

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Simultaneously, coffee could be interpreted as a subject that may divide, embodying a specific national identity. Since the 1990s, the nationalisation of coffee became characteristic of the newly created countries in post-Yugoslav space, which started fighting towards owning particular foods and drinks that once united them and contributed to the creation of Yugoslav identity.<sup>139</sup> “Thus Turkish coffee started to acquire a national identity, no longer related to Turkey. Coffee, or rather *kahva/kava/kafa*,<sup>140</sup> thus became domestic [bcs. *domaća*], Bosnian, Serbian, brewed, Macedonian,” remark Ivanović, Vučetić, and Fotiadis (2019, 16). Today, travellers exploring the region might be introduced to Bosnian, Turkish, Greek, and even Serbian coffee, depending on their destination. However, they all stand for the same type of ground, unfiltered, strong black coffee prepared in a long-handled pot, called *cezve* (Turkish variant) or *džezva/djezva/đezva*.

Even before Yugoslavia’s breakup, drinking coffee and choosing a particular type played an important ideological and demarcation role, notes linguist and anthropologist Tanja Petrović (2016). In the (self-)orientalising discussions of Yugoslavs from different parts of the country, coffee became a parameter, dividing the Yugoslav space into European (that looks towards Vienna) and Oriental (which still faces Constantinople). Petrović (2016) shares her memory from visiting Slovenia in 1983: she was stunned to see Slovens drinking the same Turkish coffee at home as her parents in Serbia. Bosnian writer Miljenko Jergović wrote about creating certain myths about coffee drinking. One of those stories is that Muslims drink coffee from mugs (bcs. *filđžani*), while Catholics drink it from cups (Petrović 2016). As Petrović’s experience illustrates, that may not be true, but according to Jergović, it was believed to be, and everyone pretended it was. Jergović claims those constructed differences remained beyond people’s lives as they drank coffee from mugs and cups on different

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<sup>139</sup> Whether this identity making was successful or not one could find out in book edited by Fotiadis, Ivanović, and Vučetić (2019), in the chapter by Radonjić (2019) in particular.

<sup>140</sup> Different spelling in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language.

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occasions without a specific reason, neither intending to side with East nor West (Petrović 2016). “Initially, Turkish coffee was the symbol of the joint past of the south Slavic peoples,” historian Nemanja Radonjić (2019) concludes; however, since the 1990s, nationalists have criticised Turkish coffee for its backwardness and associations with the *primitive* East.

Paradoxically, coffee reached the Balkans much earlier than Western Europe (Jezernik 2001).<sup>141</sup> In the 17th century, coffee houses became the centres of public (men) life, occasionally gathering people from different religious groups (Fotić 2011). The popularity of coffee changed the customs of private lives and became a symbol of gratitude or a gift (Fotić 2011). While coffee in the Balkans was mainly about what Bosnians call *ćejf*,<sup>142</sup> enjoying the present time and entertainment with good company, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western intellectuals criticised this approach for laziness.<sup>143</sup> They saw coffee primarily as an energiser for productive work (Jezernik 2001). Turkish coffee and its preparation require more time than simply pressing a machine button<sup>144</sup> and, as Slovenes say, having it *directly in the vein*.<sup>145</sup> Interestingly, Bosnian ground coffee brand *Zlatna džezva* created a foreign marketing campaign, targeting the Netherlands in particular, with the idea of *slow food* (Kadić-Maglajlić and Arslanagic-Kalajdzic 2019), that becomes a more and more popular concept in wealthy countries. However, in Latin American and African countries, where most coffee comes

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<sup>141</sup> Ethnologist and anthropologist Božidar Jezernik (2001) not only rejects the stereotype of backwardness towards the region but he also explores the customs and meanings of having coffee since 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>142</sup> I invite the reader to visit the online exhibition (*A Culture Carried: Bosnians in Bowling Green/Kulturno naslijeđe Bosanci u Bowling Green-u*) section on *ćejf* and Bosnian coffee (accessed on 15 May 2024, via <https://kfpbosniaproject.org/cejf-and-bosnian-coffee/>).

<sup>143</sup> In this context, it is worth mentioning historian Maria Todorova's (1997) book *Imagining the Balkans*, which has become a classic in discussions of the Western gaze towards the Balkans. As my reviewer Mila Orlić pointed out, one could also include *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation* (Bjelić and Savić 2002) and *Balcani. Una storia di violenza?* (Petrungaro 2021).

<sup>144</sup> Petrović (2016) sees coffee as a social dimension and explores how coffee drinking has changed through time, making interesting observations about fast coffee consumption and modernisation.

<sup>145</sup> Slo. *Eno kavo direkt v žilo* means asking for a coffee but literally for a [caffeine] injection into vein. I thank one of the interviewees and colleagues from ZRC SAZU Institute of Culture and Memory Studies in Ljubljana, Slovenia for pointing out this interesting detail.

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from, coffee remains an unaffordable luxury for coffee plantation workers (Sözen 2020).

Thus, a variety of layers unfold when analysing coffee and its drinking:

Coffee is intensely linked to memory and identity – individual and collective. As a popular Turkish folk saying goes, “a cup of coffee will be remembered for forty years”. Clearly, it is not the coffee per se which will be remembered, but rather the relation to those we are sharing the coffee with. And yet, despite this relational aspect, the conditions of labour of those who planted, picked and processed the coffee will rarely enter our consciousness. (Sözen 2020, 154)

Much exciting research has been done on coffee’s relation to peacebuilding or re-establishing cross-ethnic relations after conflict. For example, cultural anthropologist Elissa Helms (2010) touches on women’s role in re-establishing coexistence with neighbours of different ethnicities when making, serving and drinking coffee together in post-conflict BiH. She suggests that the possibility of drinking coffee with ‘former enemies’ is an essential prerequisite for regular life and communication. Helms (2010) also points out Tone Bringa’s documentary *Returning Home* (2001), which depicts how drinking coffee strengthens cross-ethnic communication and revitalises friendly relations, recreating ‘normality’ for Bosniak returnees and displaced Croats, mainly women. However, her findings suggest that the most probable healing will be “[...] based on silence and forgetting than on forgiveness and trust, even among “naturally forgiving” women.” Anthropologist Anders H. Stefansson (2010) continues with a similar statement that silence could mean partial peaceful coexistence.<sup>146</sup> “Working together or drinking coffee together was not necessarily an expression of love or deep friendship, but it was at least a sign of the acknowledgment of local sharedness, the need for social exchange and, to a certain extent, mutual hospitality,” concludes Stefansson (2010, 68). Therefore, coffee drinking has a role in facilitating dialogue and understanding between individuals or groups in divided societies. Sharing coffee may help break down barriers and

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<sup>146</sup> Eastmond and Selimovic (2012) develops this idea of silence as civility even further. In another article, Selimovic (2014) writes about respectful silence that should develop into something else (i.e. peaceful coexisting). At the same time, instead of drinking coffee, she mentions sipping glasses of juice together with the neighbours of different ethnicity. “[...] [T]here is something specific about the materiality of drink that makes it a particularly good accompaniment for talk,” remarks Manning (2012, 3).



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foster a sense of commonality between strangers, creating an infrastructure for interaction (Manning 2012, 30).

As I have just demonstrated, coffee shares many different cultural meanings, such as socialisation (Fotić 2011; Carabelli 2019), community creation (Fotić 2011; Jeffrey et al. 2018), rehearsing civility (Jeffrey et al. 2018), peaceful coexistence (Helms 2010; Stefansson 2010); energy and productivity (Petrović 2016), ritual and tradition (Kadić-Maglajlić and Arslanagic-Kalajdzic 2019; Jeffrey et al. 2018), relaxation and enjoyment (Jezernik 2001), the symbol of globalisation (Sözen 2020, 154). In this research, coffee functions as a cultural and social symbol, providing space for the remembrance of the Srebrenica genocide.

In a certain sense, the coffee custom is a carrier of cultural memory. Assmanns (Erl 2011a, 34–37)<sup>147</sup> identify two types of cultural memory: functional and stored. I argue that coffee drinking may fit into both categories in the context of this research. If one considers coffee a stored memory, the focus goes on the embedded coffee tradition handed down from generation to generation. In BiH, coffee drinking is a deeply rooted social custom representing hospitality, socialisation, quality time, and togetherness. However, it assumes a functional feature once this ritual is adapted to the contemporary social context. My selected artists re-semanticise the coffee ritual, drawing on stored memory to convey the feeling of absence and address the genocide, which resulted in the disappearance of more than 8,000 people. Bosnian coffee traditions rely on interactive activity, and artists purposefully embrace this feature to create a space of engagement. In this way, the audience becomes active participants, and unlike before, remembrance becomes different from usual and no longer passive. To sum up, the coffee-drinking culture emerges from tradition and is closely linked to cultural identity (stored memory); however, it may serve as a device for fostering

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<sup>147</sup> Due to the lack of English translations and my inability to read German, I follow Erl's (2011a) text on *functional* vs. *stored* memory based on Assmanns' chapter (Assmann and Assmann 1994).

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engagement and accelerating remembrance. In my selected art initiatives, coffee appears as a mnemonic strategy for reimagining the very idea of remembrance and lifting it to a new level. Simultaneously, coffee infuses a unique texture into memory (Young 1993), adding dynamism and inclusiveness. Although Assmanns (Erll 2011a, 34–37) treat art (supposedly traditional) as stored memory, (contemporary) art appears to be a very active segment in this research. Here, art instead operates as ‘public rituals of collective commemoration,’ so it appears somewhat more functional than stored, concerning that art employs coffee ritual. Selected art initiatives respond to current social contexts, such as genocide denial and ongoing violence, raise awareness, advocate for social change, invite dialogue and reflection, and shape perceptions and social consciousness. Finally, they challenge the dominant form of monumentalisation and propose a new way of remembrance.



## 5 Methodologies Employed: How Can Alternative Commemorative Art and Memory Artist Initiatives Be Explored?

This chapter develops a mixed methodological framework for this research:

- 1) **Multimodal Discourse Analysis** to analyse various dimensions of artworks.
- 2) Qualitative semi-structured, in-depth **interviews with artists and participants**, conducted both live and online, to gain deeper insights about the artworks.
- 3) **A combination of Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding Model** with **Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis** to explore the meanings generated by artists and their interpretation by audiences.

Accordingly, the first section 1) justifies the selection of arts initiatives, 2) presents the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress 2010, 2012), Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis and Stuart Hall's (1973) Encoding/Decoding Model of Communication. Then it 3) develops a mixed methodological framework to explore the meanings artworks communicate (for Chapter 6) and how audiences perceive them (for Chapter 7). Finally, it 4) explains the process of collecting, handling and analysing interviews, including research limitations and ethical considerations.

Meanwhile, the second section delves into the specific limitations of interviewing different audiences (ŠTO TE NEMA, *My Thousand Year Old Land*, 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* and *8372/IV*). Also, it introduces those audiences individually, bringing the reader closer to the respondents and their backgrounds, thus addressing audience biases. Each initiative has a different subsection, which includes an interview table. These subsections also reveal the audience's composition and the participants' characteristics, their impressions of

## **Chapter 5: Methodologies Employed: How Can Alternative Commemorative Art and Memory Artist Initiatives Be Explored?**

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the general composition of the public, how they heard about the art initiative and what motivated them to participate.

The author intends that this methodological framework she has created will prove helpful in the examination of alternative commemorative art and/or memory activist practices that emerge in contexts where violence, conflict, and international crimes, including genocide, have been experienced or are currently taking place.

### ***5.1 Justification, Framework, and Ethical Considerations***

#### **5.1.1 Choosing Artistic Practices: Narratives of Srebrenica and Coffee**

This research began focusing on alternative commemorative art practices in all the post-Yugoslav space,<sup>148</sup> which was obviously too much for one dissertation. Following the advice of the supervisors Cristina Demaria and Paolo Capuzzo, I reduced this research to one event of the Srebrenica genocide as its commemorative landscape proved to be very rich and diverse. Eventually, it also appeared too broad and needed reduction. Surprisingly, coffee became the common denominator in this research. Nomadic monument ŠTO TE NEMA, constructed out of 8,372 *filđžani*, became the first art project that attracted my attention as it was widely known. Thanks to colleagues Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc and Iva Kosmos, I discover two more initiatives: 8372 and *My Thousand Old Land (A Song for BiH)*. 8372 is the one-time inclusive memorial performance of the Slovenian artist Benjamin Zajc, who, together with his audience, carefully ground 8372 grams of coffee to remember each victim of the genocide. *My Thousand Old Land* is a documentary drama play by British director Susan Moffat and Bosnian War survivor Aida Salkić Haughton, staged at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme, England. Here, coffee became one of the devices of

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<sup>148</sup> I must thank Mirna Šolić, who greatly contributed to creating the very first version of this project.

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theatre language to approach the audience and send a comprehensible message. Therefore, all three initiatives employ the coffee tradition to honour the Srebrenica genocide victims.

Coffee became not the only common denominator connecting the three selected initiatives (see more in Chapters 6 and 8). They all emerge from (mostly) independent<sup>149</sup> (or predominantly autonomous) artists who invite the audience to engage in an artistic experience. Also, as I would argue later, selected initiatives share a similar texture of memory (Young 1993). Meanwhile, there was one more initiative, *You are not here for coffee/Nema te na kahvi*, that I decided not to include for a few reasons. First, *Nema te na kahvi* is a performance that seems to be an inferior replica of ŠTO TE NEMA. Second, it does not have a single author/artist but has been organised by *The Muftiate of Goražde Youth Network/Mreža mladih Muftijstva goraždanskog* since 2014 on July 12 in Goražde on the bridge of Alija Izetbegović.<sup>150</sup> The above keywords imply that the initiative has religious and political connotations: *Nema te na kahvi* is organised by the Islamic youth network, and the choice of bridge refers to the controversial political leader. One might assume it is a coincidence, but *Nema te na kahvi* appears full of Islamic and state symbols, which ŠTO TE NEMA rejected. Thus, it gives the impression that organisers copied and instrumentalised ŠTO TE NEMA without discussing it with the author, Aida Šehović. Lastly, while cups are present in this performance, coffee was absent in the first *Nema te na kahvi* performances. Although *My Thousand Old Land* does not include real coffee, it acts as it does. One can argue that *Nema te na kahvi* imitates the coffee ritual, but it does not seem convincing. Interestingly, some cups in *Nema te na kahvi* are inverted and painted white and green to create the Srebrenica flower motif. It is admirable that the community has launched a consolidating activity, yet

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<sup>149</sup> Artists still depend on certain ideas, beliefs, ideologies, funding, cultural trends, audiences and sometimes institutions. This aspect will be discussed further.

<sup>150</sup> Since 2020, a twin performance has simultaneously taken place in Ustikolina on Youth bridge/Omladinski most.

## **Chapter 5: Methodologies Employed: How Can Alternative Commemorative Art and Memory Artist Initiatives Be Explored?**

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*Nema te na kahvi* lacks some artistic development and complexity; it is overly simplistic and unambiguous.

### **5.1.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model of Communication**

Given that this research concerns the meanings generated by the selected art initiatives, the Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA<sup>151</sup>) appears to be an ideal analytical tool for exploring different dimensions of each initiative. MMDA combines multimodality, social semiotics and discourse analysis and appears to be one of the most modern applications of discourse analysis. While multimodality unfolds the role of different modes or forms of communication used in one discourse, social semiotics identify the meaning of each mode in relation to the others, and discourse analysis addresses the power and knowledge inherent in the modes (Kress 2010, 2012). Artistic commemorative practices (in this case, the nomadic monument, the commemorative performance and the theatre play) transpire as highly multimodal research objects. They involve various modes,<sup>152</sup> including visual (image, gesture, lighting, design, colours), auditory (speech, sound, music), tactile (touch, feel, texture), olfactory (smell), and gustatory (taste). These modes represent different expressions of the same discourse, revealing various aspects of perception. Collectively, modes are coherent; therefore, the discourse becomes multiple and inclusive as it includes various interacting modes that constitute the whole piece. MMDA contributes to understanding how different modes are arranged to make meaning, both together and separately. So, in this research, MMDA serves as a research tool for analysing highly multimodal art initiatives.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) works as a theoretical/interpretive concept and approach, which enables the interpretation and explanation of research findings in the broader context

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<sup>151</sup> Sometimes also addressed as MDA.

<sup>152</sup> These 'modes' are often referred to as 'languages,' forms, or figures. Kress proposed one of many possible ways to conceptualise them.

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(van Dijk 1993; Vinogradnaitė 2006; Kupetytė 2024, 25).<sup>153</sup> CDA facilitates an account of power relations, ideology, social issues, the relationship between culture and society, and discourse as a social form of action (van Dijk and Wodak 1997). The CDA is also suitable for this study because the discourse<sup>154</sup> spread by selected art initiatives deals with relations of power and domination in society (van Dijk 1993; Vinogradnaitė 2006), with a particular focus on “bottom-up relations of resistance” (van Dijk 1993). Selected artworks advocate for the often lesser-heard and less-recognised party (victims and survivors of the Srebrenica genocide in particular) whose narrative is being suppressed by Republika Srpska, countries such as Serbia, Russia, China and Hungary,<sup>155</sup> and separate individuals or particular groups. ŠTO TE NEMA, 8,372 and *My Thousand Old Land* aim to raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide, stop the genocide denial and prevent the occurrence of similar crimes. Thus, they seek to change the existing discourse order (Foucault 1998), simultaneously transforming the social and political order (van Dijk 1993; Vinogradnaitė 2006) at the local level, as well as at the regional and international levels. In addition, CDA itself aims to contribute to social change and give a voice to the suppressed (van Dijk 1993; van Dijk and Wodak 1997; Vinogradnaitė 2006). For this reason, I try to make this study as accessible as possible for different readers that may not be part of academia.

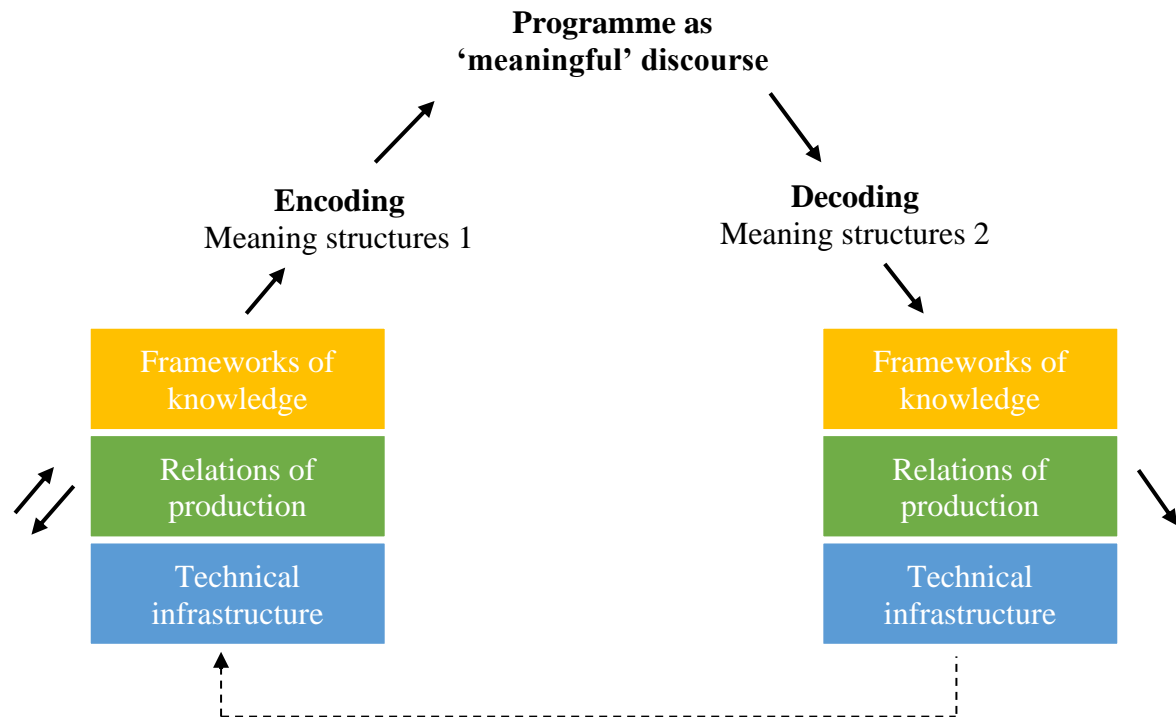
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<sup>153</sup> Many thanks to my colleague and friend Rūta Kupetytė for helping me to navigate the twists and turns of the discourse analysis/es, its/their various versions and extensive academic debates. I cite her dissertation here because she did a tremendous work that could be useful to other scholars interested in discourse analysis.

<sup>154</sup> It is possible to identify three distinct discourses disseminated by three artistic initiatives. However, due to their similarities, I propose that a single discourse is the subject of this study.

<sup>155</sup> To see all the countries that publicly deny the Srebrenica genocide, I recommend to take a look at how each country voted at the United Nations General Assembly to create an international day to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide on 23 May 2024. They are also listed at the beginning of the introduction to this thesis.

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**Figure 5.1: Hall's (1973) Decoding/Encoding Model** (scheme replicated from his article)

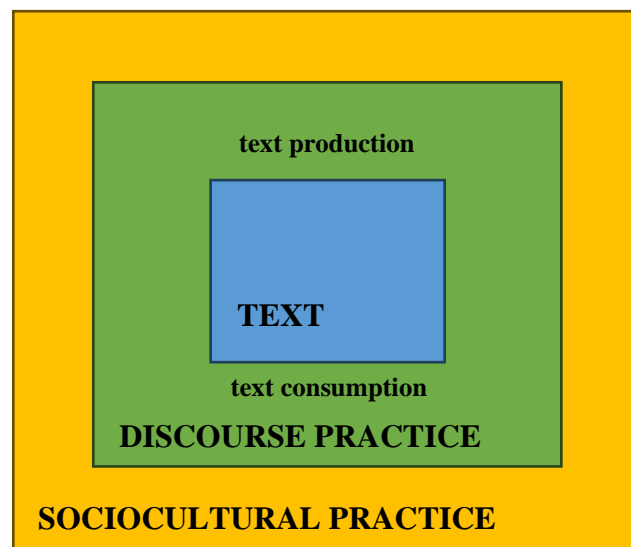
To explore how and what meanings and content artists create for audiences and how and what audiences understand when receiving their work, I combine MMDA and CDA with cultural theorist Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding communication model (Fig. 5.1). As journalism and media researcher Kupetytė (2022, 2024) demonstrated, CDA incorporated with the encoding/decoding model creates a fruitful methodological approach to analyse discourses. Although Hall initially developed his model to study television discourse, its principles seem applicable to various forms of media, including art initiatives. According to Hall's (1973) model, the receiver decodes the message not necessarily the way the sender<sup>156</sup> (in this case, the artist) has intended and relies on their experience and context. Therefore, decoding and interpreting are polysemic. Hall considers the audience to be active participants in the circulative communication process. Thus, Hall (1973) refers to three specific decoding

<sup>156</sup> As Kupetytė (2024) remarks, Hall himself does not use the terms of 'sender' and 'receiver,' but prefers to employ the terms 'encoder-producer' and 'decoder-consumer', derived from Marxist theory.

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options for the audience: 1) dominant/hegemonic (decodes and accepts it just as the sender intended), 2) negotiated (acknowledges the message but reinterprets it), and 3) oppositional (understands the message but rejects it). Critics note that decoding may go beyond Hall's model as the audience might create their own meanings outside of the proposed three options (Kupetytė 2022).



**Figure 5.2: Fairclough's (1995) framework for the three-dimensional critical discourse analysis** (scheme replicated from his book)

Kupetytė (2022) suggests that Hall's model binds well with Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis model (Fig. 5.2). Fairclough argues that texts do not appear in a vacuum. Instead, they emerge in a particular sociocultural context and interact with other texts. Therefore, Fairclough (1995) presents three analytical dimensions: 1) text analysis (description), 2) discursive practice (interpretation) and 3) sociocultural practice (explanation). The first dimension focuses on linguistic text analysis and description, paying attention to vocabulary, semantics, grammar, and structure. The second layer of analysis investigates the text's production, distribution, and consumption, additionally considering the interplay with other texts, discourses, genres, and their interpretations. The third and broadest level examines the extensive social, economic and cultural context (Fairclough 1995; Kupetytė 2022). Both Hall's and Fairclough's models fall under the paradigm of critical

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communication, becoming a perfect match (Kupetytė 2022) that contributes to understanding the power dynamics embedded in communication.

### **5.1.3 Developing Methodological Framework**

As part of this study analyses multimodal discourses expressed through art, it aims to incorporate the MMDA into the framework suggested by Kupetytė (2022). In my opinion, MMDA broadens Fairclough's first dimension of text analysis with other modes, such as visual, sound and smell elements. Regarding Hall's model, MMDA suggests that various modes contribute to encoding and decoding processes, with each mode having its own function separately and integrally, thereby contributing to the discourse's overall meaning and coherence. So, given the focus on highly multimodal objects, the linguistic aspects of the text (which typically fall within the first Fairclough's dimension) are given less attention in this research, with the aim of exploring the object as a whole. Respectively, the first part of the following analysis (Chapter 6) primarily employs MMDA to explore highly multimodal artistic commemorative practices, including visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory modes.

Simultaneously, Chapter 6 investigates the discourse the selected art initiatives created using CDA. Additionally, Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model is applied to analysing the sociocultural context in which the initiatives emerge and how they interact with each other and other texts. To explore the discursive practice of selected artworks, I started with internet media (online news outlets, websites, social media platforms, podcasts, video recordings, and other digital media). Semi-structured live and online interviews (9) with the creators and an answered questionnaire<sup>157</sup> complemented the analysis of the artworks, informing the study

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<sup>157</sup> I conducted interviews with Benjamin Zajc (2), his mentor Zala Dobovšek (1), a joint interview with Susan Moffat and Aida Salkić Haughton (1), actresses Staša Dukić (1) and Katarina Kristić (1), Aida Šehović and additional interview with Salkić Haughton (1) as her and Moffat's play highly evolved further. Following Zajc's



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about their production, distribution, and consumption, as well as their relation with other discourses and initiatives. Also, the interviews revealed the representational/ideological/civil positions the artists take in their initiatives. Interviews disclosed some of their particular choices and motivations, enabling the exploration of agency, which highly matters in discourse analysis (Vinogradnaitè 2006), as well as those aspects of the imagination and politics that I did not arrive at while only observing the art initiatives or reading the literature and media coverage. Finally, the interviews, collected internet materials and observations unfold Hall's (1973) encoding framework: 1) Technical infrastructure (dependency on institutions, technical skills, communication abilities, initiative's frequency, scale, audience size, reach and imaginable overall impact); 2) Relations of production (professional ideologies, institutional knowledge within the art world, collaborative dynamics and funding sources); 3) Frameworks of knowledge (definitions and assumptions about their target group, but also their cultural background, personal experiences, beliefs, ideological views, education and training. Evidently, this encoding framework is connected with the broader socio-cultural and political context, which inspires artists to open certain subjects (Hall 1973; Kupetytė 2024). So, Chapter 6 carefully analyses the emergence of three artistic initiatives in slightly different contexts and investigates what meanings artists intend to generate and how their works communicate (or do not) with each other.

The second part of the analysis (Chapters 7 and 8) inspects the audience's reception and examines what meanings decoders make. I conducted 41 semi-structured, mostly anonymous live and online interviews and collected 7 answered online surveys<sup>158</sup> with participants and

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performance in Osijek, we agreed that I would send him a brief questionnaire in the form of a *Word* document, so I could be informed with the most recent updates.

<sup>158</sup> 12 interviews with ŠTO TE NEMA volunteers and participants from different takes, 18 interviews with participants that took part in different versions of 8,372 and 11 interviews with *My Thousand Old Land* spectators. In the last case, to collect more impressions from spectators and get the broader picture of the audience, I also distributed slightly different online questionnaire and received 7 completed forms in return.

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spectators to explore how they perceive art initiatives. In addition to focusing on the impressions and the meaning structures, I attempt to reconstruct the decoding framework (Hall 1973): 1) Technical infrastructure (artwork accessibility to participants, possible level of interaction and engagement, potential to receive the message); 2) Relations of production (participants' social and institutional contexts, their relationship with cultural institutions and artists, their socioeconomic status); 3) Frameworks of knowledge (participants' background, their beliefs and values, ideological views, education, family, social, political and cultural context (Kupetytė 2024), including the meaning of coffee in that context. The factors above influence the public's reception and understanding of the artworks. Although Kress (2012) demonstrated how MMDA could be used to study audiences (e.g., by collecting their interpretative drawings), I chose a more traditional approach to gathering and analysing public impressions, namely the interview method and CDA. In particular, the CDA enabled me to examine the manner in which the artworks are discussed, focusing on *how* the audience talks about what they experienced, the vocabulary they use, and whether or how much they absorb such vocabulary from the artists. I must admit that the persuasiveness of their arguments and the use of adjectives (also frequently investigated by the CDA) have remained under-explored due to the large amount of material. However, it would be interesting to look into this in future research.

### **5.1.4 Collecting, Handling and Analysing Interviews: Process, Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

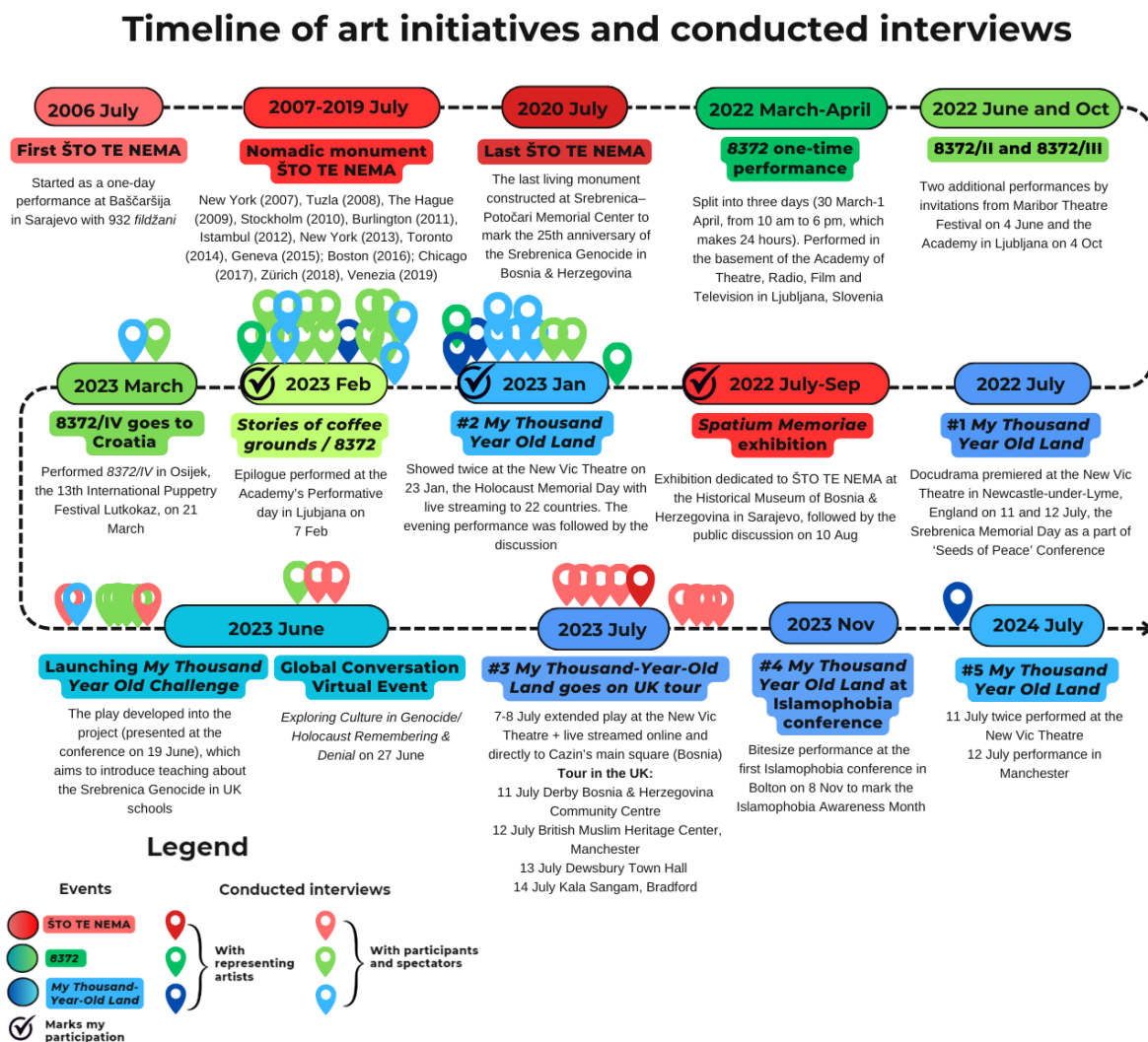
As the research intended to be purely qualitative, I did not expect to collect 49 interviews, totalling 32 hours, 52 minutes and 47 seconds. Nevertheless, my goal was to achieve saturation in my research, meaning that interviewees provided no more new information. To provide a detailed illustration of the interview collection process in connection to events regarding artworks, I created the timeline (Fig. 5.3). It provides a comprehensive overview of

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the principal events associated with the artistic initiatives, most of which occurred before the research started in November 2021 and crystallised in January/February 2023. Therefore, I must present my relationship as a viewer-participant and the artworks in question. I have never had an opportunity to participate in ŠTO TE NEMA, as the nomadic monument stopped its travels in July 2020. However, I followed ŠTO TE NEMA's official website and social media channels, visited the *Spatium Memoriae* exhibition dedicated to the project and attended the public discussion "ŠTO TE NEMA: between the Archive and the Living Monument" on 10 August 2022. Nevertheless, most of my knowledge came from the interviews with the participants and Aida Šehović herself. As the timeline (Fig. 5.3) indicates, these interviews took at least a few or even more years after the participants' involvement. While finding and contacting the creators through social media and email was relatively easy, reaching the audience became more challenging. To find people who have been involved in ŠTO TE NEMA, I have used online sources. I also employed the snowballing technique, asking interviewees if they knew more participants willing to share their memories. Once in BiH, I used my networking skills to find more participants, and my attempts have been quite successful. Overall, I collected 12 interviews with the participants, who were, in one way or another, immersed in ŠTO TE NEMA in different years. Finally, I met Šehović only in July 2023, meaning I had already collected data before our interview. Thus, the interview became an excellent opportunity to double-check some facts. Later, we remained in touch by email as I was submitting my article on honouring Srebrenica victims via #ŠtoTeNema (Jaugaitė 2024a).

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**Figure 5.3: Timeline of art initiatives and conducted interviews, created by the author**

I learned about *My Thousand Year Old Land* in December 2022. I contacted Aida Salkić Haughton on Twitter, and a few weeks later, I was on my way to Newcastle-under-Lyme to see the play, which was staged at the New Vic Theatre for the second time. On 23 January 2023, I saw the play twice and followed the public discussion after the evening play.

Haughton assisted me in meeting the audience. After the play, she publicly announced that I was seeking respondents for my research. The first interviews were carried out quickly and quite distractedly as I aimed to catch and collect various opinions. Soon, I realised I could not concentrate on the conversation as I was trying to meet more people simultaneously.

Therefore, Haughton supported and encouraged me to approach the spectators in the lobby

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and gather their contacts to contact them later and interview them online. In this way, I collected two types of interviews: instant (3) (those immediately after the play) and reflective (8) (those conducted sometime after the play). Overall, I collected 11 interviews and 7 completed survey forms. As not all spectators were willing to dedicate their time to the interview, so I thought a brief questionnaire could potentially fill the gap and enrich this study, providing a more diverse range of opinions. Due to time constraints, Haughton and Susan Moffat were both interviewed on the train to Birmingham the following day after the play. It should be noted that we also engaged in informal conversation and spent some time outside the formal interview framework. To remain apprised of the latest developments in the play, I conducted an additional online interview with Haughton in June 2024.

Regarding 8372, I did not participate in the initial one-time performance in the spring of 2022 as I was unaware of its existence. Again, my knowledge comes from the internet and social media announcements, author Benjamin Zajc (with whom I conducted the first interview of this research), and the individuals who saw the initial performance (I started the audience research by interviewing 2). It should be noted that these interviews were conducted approximately a year after 8372 took place. However, I attended the so-called epilogue, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, twice in 2023 and talked with the audience that participated immediately or some days later. Catching Zajc's audience became easier as I became more experienced after *My Thousand Year Old Land*. As only around five people could register for one performance, it was easier to approach them. Zajc informed me about the schedule of each performance so that after it was over, I could talk to the participants in the corridor and ask whether they would like to participate in my research. In this way, I gathered 11 interviews. Some interviewees participated in the initial performance, and some only in the epilogue. I collected a few instant interviews, and sometimes, we agreed to meet another time. I also conducted an additional interview with Zajc to get his insights. Finally, after Zajc

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performed in Osijek, he agreed to answer my questionnaire in written form and provided the contact information of the participants willing to talk to me. Thus, I collected 5 more interviews.

It should be noted that the study includes certain **limitations**. The fact that I did not attend all the events is a disadvantage because I mostly learned about them from secondary sources. Also, the collected interviews are not entirely equivalent, as some were conducted several years after the events, others just sometime after, and some immediately after the performance or play.<sup>159</sup> Nevertheless, this variety of interviews can also become an advantage. The dissimilarity of the interviews reflects the diversity of impressions. Older interviews reveal what has remained in the memory and appeared truly important for the participants. In contrast, fresher interviews convey instant, more spontaneous impressions and feelings, making the results more varied. Despite the limitations, this diversity enriches the study by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences.

The research set consists of 49 semi-structured interviews, including 27 live and 22 online, conducted in English (43), BCS (4), and Lithuanian (2) in the period between 8 December 2022 and 3 June 2024 without sharing questions in advance. In the cases when the interviewees were comfortable speaking in English, the interviews took place in English. In other cases, BCS and Lithuanian were used to comfort the speakers. Regarding the online interviews, the video<sup>160</sup> function was enabled to make them feel more natural. Also, after the global COVID-19 pandemic, whether interviews are conducted live or online may not make a significant difference anymore. To fulfil the CDA criteria, I transcribed all the interviews verbatim with the help of the MSWord transcription function. Later, I carefully revised the

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<sup>159</sup> More specific limitations in dealing with each arts initiative are expressed in the following section.

<sup>160</sup> However, the research employed solely audio recordings for transcription and analysis.

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text. I used my BSC language tutor's, Nataša Tadić's, assistance to double-check the interviews in BSC. We signed an agreement to keep the interviewees' data confidential.

To manage the vast amount of data, I employed manual coding (Kuckartz 2014) by assigning categories and subcategories, following an inductive (data-driven) qualitative content analysis (Žydzīūnaitė and Sabaliauskas 2017). This method allowed themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data, ensuring the coding framework was grounded in the actual content rather than predefined categories. The extensive tables of categories and subcategories are attached in Annexes [16](#), [17](#), [18](#) and [19](#) online.<sup>161</sup> However, assigning categories and subcategories alone was insufficient, as CDA is primarily concerned with the veracity and vocabulary of the claims. Although I incorporated these additional aspects into my analysis, it should be noted that the vocabulary analysis has not been as comprehensive as initially anticipated due to the extensive data set and the scope of the dissertation.

Regarding **ethical considerations**, the data is de-identified to the greatest extent possible to protect the interviewees' privacy and security. It was imperative to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of interviewees and prevent them from any potential harm. The circles of people interested in the arts are small, and people are often acquainted. Thus, anonymisation and de-identification were not straightforward and entailed more than merely changing the name. It was necessary to conceal several biographical details that would have enhanced the analysis but might have resulted in the individual being Googled and identified. However, in a few cases, experts joined the audience and became my interviewees. In those cases,

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<sup>161</sup> Due to the extensive size of the categorised interview fragments, I decided to store these large annexes on [Google Drive](#). This approach ensures easy access without overburdening the dissertation with large files and allows me to maintain control over the data. By managing the annexes externally, I can respond to any requests from participants to withdraw or modify their data, following ethical guidelines. To view the Annexes, click on the hyperlinks. Additional links are included in the last pages of this dissertation. If, for some reason, the links no longer work, please contact me personally via email: [rimante.jaugaite2@unibo.it](mailto:rimante.jaugaite2@unibo.it) / [rimantejaugaite@gmail.com](mailto:rimantejaugaite@gmail.com).



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interviews are left non-anonymous, with respondents' consent. Anonymising them would have been too challenging, or much exciting material would have been lost. Moreover, I intended to demonstrate the depth of their expertise and experience. Hence, non-anonymous interviews are conducted with Professor Caroline Sturdy Colls, PhD candidate in Forensic Science Alex Haycock, the former MEP David Hallam, and teatrologist, critic, and lecturer Igor Tretnjak. I primarily treat Sturdy Colls as an encoder because she is the principal investigator of the MTYOC project, and her given information about MTYOC was used in the chapter about encoding. However, as she also talks from the audience's point of view, the remaining material, including her impressions about the play, is also used here. The interviews with the artists, actresses and the mentor are not anonymous either. However, due to the political climate in BiH, I have withheld some sensitive private information, either voluntarily or upon request. Accordingly, I do not include the fully transcribed text in the Annexes of the dissertation but instead provide the (sub)categorised fragments of the interviews, which are presented in [Annexe 16](#) (for the interviews with the creators) and [Annexe 17](#), [18](#), [19](#) (for the interviews with the audiences). All the interviews were conducted voluntarily, and the participants could withdraw at anytime. The decision to host the interview excerpts on Google Drive allows me to remove their data from those Annexes at any time at the respondent's request. I enclose annexes to familiarise the reader with my questionnaires (see Annexes 4–14) and consent forms (see Annexes 1–3), which ensure interviewees' data protection and ethical treatment.

**Chapter 6** explores the artistic initiatives and discourses created by the encoders (with different roles, positions, and interests): art creators (Haughton, Moffat, Šehović and Zajc), actresses (Dukić and Kristić), the mentor (Dobovšek) and principal investigator (Sturdy Colls). I conducted nine semi-structured in-depth interviews and one open-ended written questionnaire (with Zajc) to gather their views. On average, one interview lasted almost 64



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minutes. Table 5.1 portrays some interview dynamics. Zajc and Haughton were interviewed several times as the information and the context evolved over time. I also realised that I was missing some information. The interview with Šehović was slightly different as I already knew much information from her participants and the internet, so during our interview, I focused on the funding and the latest updates of ŠTO TE NEMA. The interview analysis revealed the encoded meanings and content in selected art initiatives, including artists' backgrounds, motivations, messages, roles, inspirations, artistic choices, means of representation, use of coffee, the process of preparation, experienced audience reception, the circumstances in which artworks emerge and other (sub-)categories, which allows understanding the works themselves, their context and interaction with other artworks as Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis demands.

Interviewee(s)	Abbr.	Date	Location	Duration	Language	Notes
Benjamin Zajc	[BZ1]	8/12/2022	Ljubljana	1:08:09	English	
Susan Moffat and Aida Salkić Haughton	[SM] [AH1]	24/1/2023	Live	1:12:04	English	Taken on the Stoke-on-Trent-Birmingham train, but with sufficient privacy. Mild interruptions
Staša Dukić	[SD]	31/1/2023	Online	0:43:49	English	Sometimes, a weak internet connection
Zala Dobovšek	[ZD]	31/1/2023	Ljubljana	1:17:06	English	
Katarina Kristić	[KK]	8/2/2023	Online	0:23:38	Bosnian	Weak internet connection
Benjamin Zajc	[BZ2]	24/2/2023	Ljubljana	1:10:12	English	
Benjamin Zajc	[BZ3]	17/3/2023	Written questionnaire		English	Not an interview
Caroline Sturdy Colls	[CSC]	27/4/2023	Online	43:32	English	
Aida Šehović	[AŠ]	18/7/2023	Sarajevo	1:10:02	English	
Aida Salkić Haughton	[AH2]	3/6/2024	Online	1:44:48	English	
			<b>Total:</b>	9:33:20		
			<b>Average:</b>	01:03:42		

**Table 5.1: Conducted interviews with creators, actresses, mentor and project manager**

**Chapter 7 and 8** focus extensively on audience reception and perception. In total, I conducted 40 audience interviews, which lasted 29 hours, 19 minutes and 27 seconds [23:19:27]. That means an average in-depth interview lasted 36 minutes and 12 seconds [36:12]. All interviews were transcribed using the transcription function of MS Word and

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were subjected to a detailed examination. Annexes [17](#), [18](#) and [19](#) include extensive citations in their original language while I translate the Lithuanian and Bosnian fragments used in the manuscript into English. My BCS teacher, Nataša Tadić, kindly checked my Bosnian to English translations. However, any remaining errors are my responsibility.

### ***5.2 Understanding Limitations and Audience Specificity***

Before presenting the audiences and their peculiarities, discussing the limitations of the interviewing and collecting process is crucial. The interviews of the ŠTO TE NEMA audience were not collected in real-time and appeared pretty biased. It should be mentioned that the last ŠTO TE NEMA monument itinerary took place (2020 July) before this research started (2021 November). That means the interviews were conducted at least three years after (2023) the audience participated in ŠTO TE NEMA. In some cases, the gaps reached 16 years. Naturally, memories fade and change over time. On the other hand, this study proves that ŠTO TE NEMA was an intense experience, as most people remember the details vividly and can still tell a lot. Nevertheless, the audience is quite biased. Most of the interviewers are, in one way or another, closely related to the artist Aida Šehović. Another part is activists and/or concerned citizens. Therefore, the sample is relatively homogeneous. However, finding occasional participants after a few years is very difficult, if not impossible. I mostly found her audience through social networks and snowballing, which means they are from the same/similar social bubble, even though their age groups differ. So, as far as ŠTO TE NEMA is concerned, there are no spontaneous real-time interviews (interviews with people on the street) but interviews with an audience that already knew quite a lot about the Srebrenica genocide. The ŠTO TE NEMA sample seemed saturated enough (the last interviewees did not provide any new information). However, it might not be entirely satisfactory regarding the respondents' similar position. Finally, it should be added that I influenced the audience

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somewhat by referring to ŠTO TE NEMA primarily as “an installation”, which I later changed my mind about (see 3.3.) and followed the artist’s term of “a monument.”

As for the other interviews about the other two art initiatives (*Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* and MTYOL), I caught the audience and conducted a few interviews on the spot. Some *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* participants had an opportunity to participate in 8372, which occurred approximately a year before the interviews. As it was impossible to talk to many people immediately and simultaneously, most interviews took place shortly after, using collected contacts on the spot. Most of the 8372 and *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* audience looked biased because most attendees knew the artist personally. Zajc provided some contacts, but when getting the contacts on the spot, I noticed many respondents also knew him. In the case of 8372/IV on the 13th International Puppetry Festival Lutkokaz’s program, Zajc and other participants provided contacts so I could talk with the participants sometime later. So, 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, and 8372/IV audience(s) interviews took place at different intervals after the performance—sometimes shortly after, sometimes after a year or a few months later. So, some were fresher, and some were older.

The audiences of the selected art initiatives slightly differ. While the 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, and 8372/IV audience(s) mainly consist of young (emerging) art professionals, MTYOL was highly attended by senior seasoned theatregoers. ŠTO TE NEMA audience presumably was quite universal, but the people that I managed to talk to were mainly (young) adults and middle-aged. Overall, more women than men participated in the study, along with some gender-diverse participants. For MTYOL and Zajc’s performances, the gender balance of respondents was approximately equal. In the case of ŠTO TE NEMA, most participants were women. Regarding cultural background, ŠTO TE NEMA respondents were exclusively Bosnian (living in BiH or the Bosnian diaspora). Other audiences were more diverse. MTYOL mainly included the UK audience but also people from the Balkan

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diaspora, a student from the US living in the UK and a participant from the Jewish community. The audience for 8372 and *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* in Ljubljana was primarily local—Slovene—but included a few people from other post-Yugoslav countries living in Slovenia. The 8372/IV audience in Osijek happened to be more diverse due to the international festival, which included participants from Croatia, Scotland, and Lithuania.<sup>162</sup> Overall, it can be concluded that the MTYOL audience was the most diverse in terms of age, gender, cultural background and professional/ educational background. Before disclosing the results, taking a closer and broader look at all three audiences is valuable.

### 5.2.1 ŠTO TE NEMA audience

Interviewee	Date	Location	Duration	Language	Participation
Esma	26/4/2023	Online	43:36	English	2007 NYC UN, 2011 Burlington, 2013 NYC
Dino	16/5/2023	New York	31:12	English	2007 NYC UN, 2013 NYC
Mira	23/6/2023	Online	50:56	English	2007 NYC UN, 2011 Burlington, 2013 NYC, 2016 Boston, 2018 Zurich
Lara	23/6/2023	Tuzla	20:25	Bosnian	2008 Tuzla
Šejla	4/7/2023	Tuzla	1:29:26	English	2020 Srebrenica–Potočari
Fatima	4/7/2023	Tuzla	49:34	Bosnian	–
Jasmina	6/7/2023	Sarajevo	40:37	English	2020 Srebrenica–Potočari
Nadira	12/7/2023	Gornji Potočari	12:58	Bosnian	2020 Srebrenica–Potočari
Velma	8/8/2023	Online	33:58	English	2020 Srebrenica–Potočari
Hana	14/8/2023	Online	39:12	English	2020 Srebrenica–Potočari
Emina	14/8/2023	Online	30:26	English	2017 Chicago
Adna	20/8/2023	Online	34:54	English	2016 Boston
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>7:57:14</b>		
		<b>Average:</b>	<b>39:46</b>		

**Table 5.2: Interviews with ŠTO TE NEMA's respondents**

It is challenging to categorise the ŠTO TE NEMA's respondents (Table 5.2), as their biographies are diverse and rich. Therefore, their roles are interlaced, and most belong/ed to more than one category at a time. At least five respondents work in the NGO sector, 3 were students at the time when the interview took place, 2 are journalists, four work in the creative art industry or support artist, one is engaged in the field of literature, another one is in digital

<sup>162</sup> The festival included a Slovene delegation, but I only spoke with Zajc.

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education and one more works in the tourism sector. The respondents were young adults and middle-aged respondents, including one respondent from the older generation. One may add that five respondents belong to the Bosnian diaspora in the United States, and the remaining 7 are Bosnians living in BiH. Three respondents come from Srebrenica and belong to three different generations: Fatima was displaced from Srebrenica at the beginning of the war as an adult, Adna was born in Srebrenica but moved with her family when she was young because of the risk of persecution, and Nadira belongs to the new generation born in Srebrenica after the war. These respondents represent the families of Srebrenica survivors and appear to be a critical group for this study. Their insights are precious, given that the ŠTO TE NEMA is primarily dedicated to this community and their relatives who did not survive. Although the other respondents do not have a direct connection to Srebrenica, most of them and their older family members witnessed ethnic persecution in one way or another and could relate to what happened in Srebrenica. Their connection to the trauma and memory of forced displacement makes them witnesses and (post-)witnesses of the Bosnian War and the Srebrenica genocide, giving them a sense of responsibility to bear witness to atrocities, even if they did not experience them themselves.

Most respondents (10/12) participated in ŠTO TE NEMA as Šehović's friends to assist her or were volunteers, making their responses quite biased. However, finding ordinary passers-by who had seen/participated in the project was challenging. Only Lara was a passer in the 2008 iteration. Fatima was not involved in the project at all, but it seemed different to me before the interview. However, the interview with her provided much context about the political climate of the 1990s and the non-governmental sector at that time, so it was very comprehensive and valuable. She also told me what she had heard about ŠTO TE NEMA. In conclusion, the audience I spoke to was not so much a real audience as they were contributors

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to the project. On the one hand, it is a pity that I did not manage to get the real audience, but on the other hand, they give insights from the inside that are not necessarily purely biased.

The respondents were involved in different ŠTO TE NEMA annual iterations (some have participated in more than one): 3 participated in 2nd iteration at The United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA, in 2007; 1 in 3rd iteration at Trg Žrtava Genocida in Tuzla, BiH in 2008; 2 in 6th iteration on Church Street in Burlington, USA in 2011; 3 in 8th ŠTO TE NEMA at Washington Square Park in New York, USA in 2013; 1 in 11th iteration at Copley Square in Boston, USA in 2016; 1 in 12th iteration at Daley Plaza in Chicago, USA in 2017, and 5 in the 15th and final iteration of the ŠTO TE NEMA at Srebrenica Memorial Centre in Potočari, BiH. The impressions of those who participated in 2020 seem to be mixed with those of the first Srebrenica Youth School, organised by the Post-Conflict Research Centre (PCRC) in cooperation with the Memorial Centre and the annual commemoration at the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial. So, there was an interesting overlap between the alternative and the conventional commemoration at the original site of suffering. This overlap only enhanced the participants' experiences and enriched the annual commemoration with new meanings (such as coffee for the deceased), which had already been practised elsewhere.

The interviewers gave some opinions on what the general ŠTO TE NEMA audience looked like abroad and in front of the Memorial Centre (2020). According to Esma, ŠTO TE NEMA focused on uninformed foreign audiences. Bosnians usually were in the crowd, and they were highly aware of the genocide, so they came mainly for support. The audience also depended on the city. New York had a more transitory audience, meaning many tourists and fewer locals [Dino]. Chicago attracted people of different cultural backgrounds: "All different races

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were pouring the cups” [Emina], including Bosnians.<sup>163</sup> Burlington was also very welcoming to ŠTO TE NEMA because of the sizeable Bosnian diaspora and the fact that people are more connected there than in the big cities; there are also fewer events in Burlington, so the nomadic monument attracted attention [Mira, Esmā]. Regarding the 2020 iteration, the audience seemed more targeted: “I guess they were coming to the commemoration. [...] I think some were relatives of the [...] people who were victims. [...]. Also, politicians came, you know, some people who are [...] have that leading role in society.” [Jasmina]. *Marš Mira* participants also joined ŠTO TE NEMA in 2020 [Šejla]. Šejla and Hana noted that people often brought their own *fildžans* to fill up with coffee and donate for the project. Nadira highlighted that the audience exceptionally included those who acknowledge that the genocide took place, as opposed to those who deny it. Šejla and Hana emphasise that despite the global COVID pandemic, some international participants who were connected with the project before and foreign media also attended the 15th ŠTO TE NEMA. No matter the location, ŠTO TE NEMA successfully engaged young families with children.<sup>164</sup> Velma summarised that the monument worked out as a universal tool to engage different audiences:

[...] I think it’s amazing that [it] is open space. And it’s open for everyone to participate in. I mean, in Srebrenica, I think it wasn’t like that...? If I’m not mistaken, I’m not sure if I remember [it] good, but in other city[ies], it is. It’s open participate[ion by] whoever wants, whoever is passing by. I think that’s amazing because that’s a way to [...] engage everyone and to like make it more interesting in a way, because if I’m interested in something then that means that I will go home and explore it more. So, I think that’s the great thinking behind it. [Velma]

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<sup>163</sup> “Chicago is so diverse and [...] we do have [...] a large [...] Bosnian population. So, I don’t think it’s the first time they’ve heard of like Bosnian people. They weren’t very familiar a lot of them with Srebrenica, when we explained that each cup represented a person [...].” [Emina]

<sup>164</sup> “[...] [W]e had children [...] and parents coming up to us. And it was really interesting to explain to them because I mean you have like little kids and then you have teenagers you need to, like, stoop down to their level and to explain to them why that was there. And it was really nice to see that parents were bringing their children that were so young. [Šejla] / I remember just a lot of like, younger parents with their children, like a lot of children participating. [...] I was anxious and I had a little bit of fear of how people were going to react, but for the most part they were. They were very respectful and open.” [Emina]

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Esma, Mira, Dino, and Adna were primarily motivated to participate/volunteer by their friendship with Aida Šehović. Hana followed the initiative for many years, and Jasmina previously wrote an article about ŠTO TE NEMA. Both of them got to participate in the 15th iteration due to work but also had a personal interest in it. Šejla and Nadira first learned about Srebrenica Youth School (friends and organisations they belong to invited them). Once enrolled, they automatically got to participate in ŠTO TE NEMA. Lara and Fatima informed themselves about ŠTO TE NEMA via media and the internet. Additionally, Fatima learned much about it from other NGO members to whom she belongs.

Respondents participated/volunteered for different reasons. The ones who were friends of Šehović wanted to support her, additionally finding her project meaningful in addressing the Srebrenica genocide. Others emphasised their interest in art [Jasmina, Šejla] and desire to be involved in ŠTO TE NEMA.<sup>165</sup> This desire often merged with the interest to visit Srebrenica<sup>166</sup> as a vital sight of painful memories and participate in summer school.<sup>167</sup> Emina pointed out her personal connection with a friend from Srebrenica as the motivation.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, Emina and Nadira highlight responsibility and commitment to witness the genocide, while Lara primarily had a similar kind of preventive and reflective motivation:

I felt like I had a responsibility to [...] somehow help. And I thought that what Aida was doing was [...] genuine [...] and so [...] I just wanted to be a part of it. [Emina]

[...] I was encouraged to participate by life in Srebrenica. We, from Srebrenica, who lost someone in the genocide, have greater and greater desire to participate in all of this because we are so glad that some people are making an effort to honour the victims in different ways, that they think about the victims and do not deny the genocide. [Nadira]

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<sup>165</sup> “[...] I really wanted to help, so that was kind of my secret desire to kind of be involved in some artistic project. To be involved directly, not just as an observer.” [Jasmina]

<sup>166</sup> “[...] I was interested in going because it would be, and it was my first time visiting Srebrenica.” [Šejla]

<sup>167</sup> “I was just thinking ‘ohh, I’m gonna go. I’m gonna have some new experiences, gonna meet some new people,’ [...]” [Šejla] / “I mean, we were obligated in one way to participate but I think I thought it was a great way to explore everything [...]” [Velma]

<sup>168</sup> “[...] [M]y closest friend is from Srebrenica. [...] She lost her father and uncles. And uh. I know like what July is for her. I mean, I can try to know, but so obviously I felt [...] connected because of her.” [Emina]



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That war event [the genocide] remained impactful and has been following us constantly all these years. Why wouldn't we speak up and continue talking about it until everyone knows it, so that no one else has to experience it. [Lara]

Thus, this is a particular sample of conscientious citizens who have a kind of ethical responsibility to resist forgetting and genocide denial.

### 5.2.2 My Thousand Year Old Land audience

Interviewees	Date	Location	Duration	Language	Participation
Nora	23/1/2023	Newcastle-under-Lyme	7:23	English	Afternoon show on 23 Jan 2023
Margaret and Elizabeth	23/1/2023	Newcastle-under-Lyme	23:56	English	Afternoon show on 23 Jan 2023
Daniel	23/1/2023	Newcastle-under-Lyme	53:36	English	Twice on 23 Jan 2023
Alex (Haycock)	30/1/2023	Online	27:23	English	Afternoon show on 23 Jan 2023
David (Hallam)	30/1/2023	Online	32:59	English	Evening show on 23 Jan 2023
Henry	1/2/2023	Online	34:44	English	Evening [?] show on 23 Jan 2023
Lily	2/2/2023	Online	29:14	English	Afternoon show on 23 Jan 2023
Alice	16/2/2023	Online	29:08	English	Evening show on 23 January 2023
Zora	16/2/2023	Online	45:46	English	Afternoon show on 23 January 2023
Lejla	11/3/2023	Online	51:53	English	Twice on 23 January 2023
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>5:36:02</b>		
		<b>Average:</b>	<b>33:36</b>		
Helen	27/1/2023	Written questionnaire		English	Few times
Eleanor	8/2/2023	Written questionnaire		English	One of the shows on 23 Jan 2023
James	8/2/2023	Written questionnaire		English	One of the shows on 23 Jan 2023
Thomas	9/2/2023	Written questionnaire		English	Afternoon show on 23 Jan 2023
Albert	9/2/2023	Written questionnaire		English	Evening show on 23 Jan 2023
Sophia	7/3/2023	Written questionnaire		English	Evening show [?] on 23 Jan 2023
Maria	8/3/2023	Written questionnaire		English	One of the shows on 23 Jan 2023

**Table 5.3: Interviews with *My Thousand Year Old Land* respondents**

Firstly, it should be noted that the group of respondents (11+Sturdy Colls) is not limited to interviews, and seven written questionnaires of a similar nature were complimented (see Table 5.3). Indeed, it is an entirely different way of collecting data; however, it allowed me to gather more information about the audience and to include the respondents who did not have time for an in-depth interview. Therefore, the mixed group of respondents are retired and semi-retired seniors (mainly retired teachers) (8), university staff (4) and a student whose research relates to the play, a former Member of the European Parliament (MEP), a Salvation Army member, a self-employed trainer, an NGO sector employee and person working in arts.

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Three respondents come from the Balkan region, one from the US, and the rest (14+1) are from the UK. Two respondents have deep/personal connections to Holocaust history and survivors. While some had limited prior knowledge about the Bosnian War, others were reasonably well-informed, a few having a strong professional interest in a play. Several respondents appeared to have a close connection to New Vic Theatre as seasoned theatre fans or at least theatre enthusiasts. Most respondents arrived from Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and other parts of Staffordshire; however, some came to see the play from farther locations (7). They proved to be very open, curious and empathetic. The MTYOL audience sample is diverse in terms of background (age, profession, geographic origin) and connection to the subject (theatre, Holocaust history, Bosnian War), which helps capture a range of perspectives. However, it may not be fully representative of the broader population.

The UK participants could be categorised as *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019) in the sense that they are indirectly connected to the tragic event through the broader role the UK, along with other Western powers, played in the Srebrenica genocide. In particular, the international community's failure to prevent the crime, despite various diplomatic warnings and the UN presence on the ground, implicates these participants. Although they have no direct connection to Srebrenica, according to Rothberg, they become implicated through their country's historical role in maintaining global order and its selective engagement in international conflicts. Also, the older generation in the UK passively witnessed the events of the Bosnian War on radio and television, and most of them remember at least some recollections of the genocide. Meanwhile, MTYOL spectators from Bosnia and the Balkan region might be described as direct witnesses and post-witnesses or even diasporic memory carriers, reflecting their connection to the trauma, either through family history, community, or cultural identity.

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I asked respondents what they thought of the general audience. Many replied that the play targeted a specific audience who already knew something about the topic and were curious/open to learning more.<sup>169</sup> Respondents split the audience into students and young people, seniors who frequently attend theatre,<sup>170</sup> seasoned theatregoers, local audience, non-local attendees, including some incidental visitors and travelling attendees, some political activists and online audience, which consists of local pupils and particular interest group, including Bosnians.<sup>171</sup> A couple of respondents highlighted the strong involvement of local schools<sup>172</sup> and the Jewish community<sup>173</sup> in the New Vic Theatre. Even if the play suited diverse age groups, Nora concluded there was probably no random audience, and Sturdy Colls added that she could spot many acquaintances of the creators in the audience.

The audience got to know about the play in different ways: 1) many knew the creators Moffat and Haughton personally and came to support them and/or were curious to see their work; 2) others got to know about the play from Sturdy Colls and Staffordshire University that lead the a companion MTYOC project; 3) some follow New Vic theatre events and attend theatre regularly in any case; 4) a few got to know about MTYOL from the media, *Guardian* article (Butterwick 2022) in particular, and shared it with their friends or relatives. Some

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<sup>169</sup> “I think it was more a targeted audience. They [...] knew the story and they had an interest on it. [Nora] / Inevitably, I think the play was gathering the audiences who were already open to that [...]” [Zora].

<sup>170</sup> The New Vic Theatre and many other theatres in the UK offer discounted tickets for senior citizens and organise matinée plays to engage them. “[A] lot of older [...] people actually prefer to go to the theatre rather than to the cinema [...] cause that’s what they’ve grown up with. [...] [I]t’s activity for them to do and... Quite a lot of them enjoy. Ohh speaking for my own like grandparents they enjoy experiencing new things.” [Alex]

<sup>171</sup> “I think having people locally and [...] online who are originally from Bosnia was also very important because again [...] as part of this commitment to [...] ensuring we don’t forget what happened [...]” [CSC]

<sup>172</sup> “[...] [T]hey were live streaming it to high school children, which my son would have been watching at the same time as I’ve watched it.” [Nora]

<sup>173</sup> “[...] [W]hen I joined the local Jewish community here, the then president [...] used to bring us, a whole group of us to this HMD [Holocaust Memorial Day] [...] every January, that Sue [Moffat] [...] used to organise. And it’s changed quite a lot over the years, it’s obviously been different sets of focus, [...]” [Daniel]

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respondents remarked that the communication and promotion campaign could be more effective as they found the play meaningful, informative and educative.

A variety of reasons motivated respondents to attend MTYOL. Many recall the Bosnian War as they witnessed it through media in the 1990s; thus, they aimed to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Various audience members were particularly interested in history, the Bosnian War, and geopolitics. A few were driven by academic and professional motivation in particular. Some attended due to their relationship with the creators or admiration towards Moffat's directing and interest in authentic and multi-dimensional storytelling, empowering individual stories. Some were encouraged by their family history in the Balkans, so they had a regional interest in and supported its representation in the UK. It is vital to keep in mind that the play was shown to commemorate the Holocaust Memorial Day, so some people came in order to join the commemoration. One respondent volunteers at the New Vic and claimed to have seen a few MTYOL shows.

### **5.2.3 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 and 8372/IV audience(s) in Ljubljana and Osijek**

As already mentioned, 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372, and 8372/IV audiences (see Table 5.4) consisted mainly of (emerging) young art professionals, including dramaturges (or dramaturgy students) (3), theatre or/and art critics (6), art managers (2), writer (1) and academics (4) who, in the course of their interdisciplinary research, have contact with art. These roles often overlap, simultaneously involving respondents in several activities. Two respondents (Petra and Diana) had different backgrounds, but their career paths brought them to the theatre industry. The audience also included two representatives of the natural sciences (probably future scientists): Vesna and Filip. A couple of respondents had linguistic backgrounds: Žan and Petra. However, all participants expressed interest in art and curiosity

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about participating in the Zajc's performance(s). The other motives for taking part were interest in the question of responsibility, the courage of Zajc to dive into a dark subject, familiarity with his previous works, academic and professional motivation, interest in theatre/performative practices, the topic itself, post-Yugoslav cultural sphere, disasters and tragedies, and having a quality time with a friend.

Interviewees	Date	Location	Duration	Language	Participation
Mara	17/1/2023	Ljubljana	33:51	English	8372
Milica	17/1/2023	Ljubljana	52:27	English	8372
Žan	7/2/2023	Ljubljana	27:15	English	8372 and <i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Petra	7/2/2023	Ljubljana	12:37	English	<i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Jana	7/2/2023	Ljubljana	20:35	English	<i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Milan	7/2/2023	Ljubljana	31:43	English	<i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Nina	13/2/2023	Ljubljana	17:23	English	<i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Jure	13/2/2023	Ljubljana	31:46	English	8372 and <i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Daria	14/2/2023	Ljubljana	29:49	English	<i>Coffee grounds</i>
Lucija	16/2/2023	Ljubljana	36:41	English	8372 and <i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Teja	21/2/2023	Ljubljana	24:17	English	8372 and <i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Vesna	23/2/2023	Ljubljana	1:10:20	English	8372 and <i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Filip	19/3/2023	Online	29:09	English	<i>Coffee Grounds</i>
Diana	5/5/2023	Online	42:40	English	8372/IV in Osijek
Linasa	10/5/2023	Online	41:58	Lithuanian	8372/IV in Osijek
Igor (Tretinjak)	12/5/2023	Online	1:00:42	English	8372/IV in Osijek
Ewan	13/5/2023	Online	36:11	English	8372/IV in Osijek
Elena	21/6/2023	Online	35:56	Lithuanian	8372/IV in Osijek
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>9:46:11</b>		
		<b>Average:</b>	<b>Av. 35:17</b>		

**Table 5.4: Interviews with 8372 and *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 (Ljubljana) and 8372/IV (Osijek) respondents**

It is important to note that most of the audience were people from Zajc's inner circle, including close friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and loved ones. Naturally, they learned about the performances from Zajc himself and wanted to support him through their presence. His mentor, Zala Dobovšek, also sent invitation emails to a targeted group of scholars (including her friends) and students who might be personally or/and professionally interested. Inner circles disseminated information further among their friends. Also, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 was a part of the Performative Day at the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television (AGRFT), and 8372/IV was included in the 13th International Puppetry Festival Lutkokaz's program in Osijek. So, these events automatically defined a relatively

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closed audience of young art professionals, professors and students. The contact collection process brought only one complete outsider, who did not know anyone and happened to be the Performative Day—Filip. It should be added that I also interviewed a member of the older generation (probably Gen X), Nina, a mother of one of the students/performance artists, whose interview revealed a different opinion from that of the younger respondents (Generation Z and Millennials). In other cases, the respondents consist of art professionals. Overall, the sample is not representative of a broader, general audience. Instead, it is peculiar, involving people connected to the art scene, mainly through personal or professional ties to Zajc, which leads to a self-referential or insular audience.

The interviewees agree that Zajc's performances mainly targeted art scene regulars, Zajc's social circle and the AGRFT students and professors. Even researchers from other faculties/institutes noted that they felt like outsiders. Mara remarks that the format of the performance additionally limited the audience. Nina profoundly regrets that the audience was highly self-referential and thinks the Performative Day should be advertised better. Žan, Jure and Lucija agree that Zajc's performances "could actually bring people to the theatre because it's not the classical thing where you have to, you know, sit in one place for two hours and just be passive" [Žan]. Lucija agrees that "it would be interesting for people that aren't like cultural workers or don't have [...] this high interest in that type of events." On the other hand, Jure notes that audiences outside the Academy may experience performances differently from the art scene regulars I have mainly interviewed.

It should be added that the different composition of participants in the performance led to different experiences, including the perception of the atmosphere and overall impact.

Interviews reveal that each experience was shaped by several actors, including environmental conditions, mood changes, interpersonal communication among participants, (un)familiarity with other participants and Zajc personally, topics touched upon, the tone set, the atmosphere

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created, and other human factors. Personal background, experiences, knowledge and beliefs undoubtedly influenced the experience. However, some interviews with 8372/IV participants revealed the importance of physical comfort. Many interviews revealed the peculiarities of group dynamics. Although respondents attended the *same* performance, participants of separate takes in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* revealed how different their group experiences were. While most participants were content with their companions and mostly knew them, outsiders, Nina and Filip, were dissatisfied with their company.<sup>174</sup> Filip expressed his unfamiliarity with the participants and his lack of interest in interacting with them. In Nina's case, she was disappointed by the disrespectful attitude of the participants towards the Srebrenica theme. Zajc's friends and acquaintances admit that the performance became an occasion to have a good time with the people you know—indeed, it was a coffee-drinking performance; on the other hand, they also reflect a paradox of enjoying oneself while talking about genocide.<sup>175</sup> Sociologist Cecilia Sosa (2024) explores the phenomenon of subversive laughter used in performance, which commemorates traumatic historical events. She illustrates how the use of irony and satire, which evoke laughter, engages the audiences to think about human rights violations and painful historical events like the forced disappearances organised by the Argentine dictatorship. According to Sosa, humour becomes an effective tool to involve younger generations, who were not directly involved in the tragic events but are still affected by their legacy. Similarly, in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, humour emerged spontaneously—not initiated by Zajc, but rather by the participants, who also became performers.

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<sup>174</sup> "I expected much more serious atmosphere. Much more emotional, involved participants. And I think it was quite too much chatting and *hahahah* and *hihiho*. So, I don't feel very good amongst my [...] participants." [Nina] / "I have not seen them before, nor they look like people that I would enjoy. Having to [...] spend time with. [...] Or conversation." [Filip]

<sup>175</sup> "And makes you think about the attitude you have. [...] How I. Was so easily swayed. In this cheerful. Ambiance. Even when I knew what the. Performance was about. To just go along with the group and you know, just laugh about, you know, stupid things. It's not about that, actually." [Vesna]

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*Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* performance developed over time, meaning that Zajc did not have a program initially. So, the participants who came earlier got an unpolished version of the performance, in contrast to the ones who came later and had a refined performance. Therefore, the participant composition and timing also determined the overall experience.

Out of all respondents, 7 took part in the original 8372 (30 March-1 April 2022), 11 participated in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* (7 February 2023) shown on Performative Day, and 5 people participated in 8372/IV in Osijek (21 March 2023). Attending or knowing about the first performance, 8372, also shaped their perception. Five participants of *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* had seen 8372 before, and three had been informed about it, while Daria and Nina only learned about 8372 during the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. Filip seems to have skipped the information about 8372 altogether, which led to his interpretation being quite different from what Zajc intended.

Those who had seen the first performance, 8372, like Lucija and Teja, claim that participation in the epilogue was more profound and comprehensible.<sup>176</sup> Although Jana did not see 8372, she claims that detailed knowledge about it has given her a better understanding of *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. Indeed, Zajc's account of 8372 inspired Petra, Jana, and Milan to come and see the epilogue. Though Jure agrees that participation in 8372 enriched the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* experience, he also believes the piece was self-explanatory.<sup>177</sup> From audience responses, one can conclude that those who saw the second performance after

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<sup>176</sup> “[...] [*Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*] was more confusing, for me. I don't know if I wouldn't have the experience of the first one [8372], I would be that it's about Benjamin's grandmother and like telling your future out of a coffee cup and... Making up stories.” [Lucija] / “I think, Benjamin says at the end, [...] ‘yeah, so somebody died.’ And when you connect all the graining coffee, the drinking it [...] and some point you think you're [...] the one who is actually destroying the universe or the people there, so. Yeah, I think it [...] makes a difference if you come only on the drinking coffee part or if you grain yeah before.” [Teja]

<sup>177</sup> “[...] [W]e all. Got the information about the first performance, but [...] Probably the experience was much richer for the ones who were actually there in March last year [2022]. Yet I think that it was not necessary to be there to understand or comprehend completely what was going on.” [Jure]



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seeing the first one interpreted everything more similarly to how Zajc intended. The others had more room for their own interpretations, which were very interesting in many cases.

Interviews revealed that Zajc's friends knew more details about the performances than other participants, which affected their experience by allowing them to interpret the performances as intended. For example, Vesna, a close friend of Zajc's, was well-informed about the creative process and backstage. Nevertheless, this foreknowledge also allowed Zajc's friends to confidently move beyond the given context, generating new meanings and drawing parallels with other contexts. Personal background, education and experiences also enriched the interpretations. For example, dramaturge Lucija's and researcher Daria's interest in narrative structure is very much reflected in the interviews and their sophisticated responses. Also, Daria and Milica benefited from their academic knowledge of commemoration and art. Naturally, the respondents filtered the shows according to their own experience.

Ultimately, the participants from Slovenia can be classified as *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019) due to Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia, which accelerated the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Woodward 1995). Once Slovenia declared its independence, it experienced the so-called Ten-Day War; however, the country was not involved directly in the violent conflicts that followed in Croatia and BiH. And nevertheless, Slovenia can be treated as a part of the broader Yugoslav context, having indirect ties to the Srebrenica genocide through its historical position in the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the regional dynamics that led to the conflict. Accordingly, Slovene participants may appear as *implicated subjects* through Slovenia's role in navigating its position during the dissolution of Yugoslavia while the violence escalated elsewhere. Simultaneously, Slovenian participants may be categorised as (post-)Yugoslav witnesses (depending on the generation) through their belonging to the post-Yugoslav *region of memory* (Fridman 2022): Slovenes share a cultural, historical, and regional memory of Yugoslavia and its subsequent dissolution. The older generation lived for

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a significant portion of their lives in Yugoslavia and recalled witnessing the conflict via media. Also, due to the Bosnian War, many Bosnians fled and moved to Slovenia to live, so younger generations could develop friendships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, Zajc performed in Osijek, where the audience comprising Croats, Lithuanians, and Scots attended his *8372/IV*. As the discussed MTYOL/UK audience, Scots might be considered as *implicated subjects* due to the UK's role in the conflict, applying Rothberg's (2019) approach. This concept hardly applies to Croats and Lithuanians. Croatia was directly involved in the Bosnian War through Croatia President Franjo Tuđman's ambitions to control and annex a part of BiH. So, there is no doubt that Croatia shares a regional trauma and bears witness to the events that shaped the Balkans in the 1990s, making Croatian audience (post-)witnesses of the Srebrenica genocide. However, given Croatia's current politics of memory, which excludes any undesirable memory of the war and responsibility, and the fact that young people do not learn about it, the younger generation of Croats could also be described as an *implicated subject*.

The Lithuanian participants are the most difficult to categorise. It is not clear whether the Lithuanians can be referred to as *implicated subjects*, as Lithuania only joined NATO and the Western powers in 2004, while undergoing a difficult period of transformation in the 1990s. On the other hand, witnessing (through media) without direct involvement still creates a form of implication, according to Rothberg. However, I am unsure what influence a young and weak Lithuanian state would have had on resolving the conflict. But then again, the Baltic States became an example of the peaceful secession of the Soviet Union. As Christopher Clark's (2013) book<sup>178</sup> shows, small and relatively insignificant states can play a significant

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<sup>178</sup> Christopher Clark (2013) writes about Serbia's role in launching the First World War. Nevertheless, I believe that the same argument about the role of minor players in major politics could be applied to this case.

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role in international politics. From this perspective, Lithuanians might be considered *implicated subjects* or distant passive witnesses who followed the Bosnian War through news and media but were not involved politically or militarily.

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ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL involved all three types of attendees, as Serafini (2018) suggests: regular participants, spontaneous participants, and spectators. In contrast, Zajc's performances 8372 and *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* had no spectators—everyone had to become a participant to be involved. Only 8372/IV included spectators, who could become active participants and come on the stage to grind the coffee. I had a chance to interview both regular and spontaneous participants who attended *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. In the case of 8372 and 8372/IV, I talked with regular participants who belonged to specific art circles and frequently attended similar performances. For ŠTO TE NEMA, most of the individuals I interviewed were regular participants familiar with the project and supportive of the initiative. However, I also spoke with one spectator who happened to pass by ŠTO TE NEMA in Tuzla (2008), when the event was less participatory than it would become in later years. Regarding MTYOL and its play format, one should probably consider spectators over participants. Here, spectators could be defined as regular and spontaneous. On the other hand, the play was quite inclusive (which I discuss in the following Chapter), so the attendees might also be addressed as participants. Nevertheless, the individuals I interviewed were not spontaneous participants or spectators, as they had deliberately come to the theatre. Thus, my respondents were regular spectators or participants.

## **6 From Beans to Remembrance: Coffee-Based Commemorative Initiatives to Honour Victims of the Srebrenica Genocide**

The chapter begins with a description of each initiative, including background information, interspersed with quotes from the artists to capture its essence and underlying coded meanings, and photographs of the art initiatives, published with permission. Additionally, Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis is used to examine the sociocultural context in which the initiatives emerge and how they interact with each other and other texts. The second section focuses on the comparison of the three initiatives. The comparison begins with tabulating key data on initiatives and then using Hall's (1973) model to explore in depth the context (technical infrastructure, production relations, knowledge frameworks) that led to the particular encoding of each initiative. The main results are summarised and presented in tabular form. Further, the Multimodal Discourse Analysis is employed to explore each artwork's sensorial realms. Finally, selected art initiatives are put under the microscope of memory studies. First, this subsection argues that selected art initiatives, particularly ŠTO TE NEMA, contribute significantly to the iconisation of the Srebrenica genocide (i.e., making new symbolic representations, like the coffee ritual, widely recognizable and meaningful beyond the original genocide context). Then, it posits that the selected artists assumed the role of memory agents due to their artistic endeavours and activities. Consequently, Gutman and Wüstenberg's (2021) typology for comparative research on memory activists is applied to ascertain the nature of their activism. The final subsection employs the concept of *multidirectional memory* (Rothberg 2009) to examine the interconnectivity of the Srebrenica genocide with other significant instances of atrocity and international crime within selected artworks or across various artists' activities. It

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argues that although the primary focus of the artworks is the Srebrenica genocide, the artists are highly aware of the contemporary contexts and address them indirectly.

### 6.1 Exploring Selected Art Initiatives

#### 6.1.1 Nomadic monument ŠTO TE NEMA by Aida Šehović

*ŠTO TE NEMA is an artist-led organization committed to imagining and building a world without genocide. (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024c)*

ŠTO TE NEMA is a long-term artistic project (from 2006 to present) which developed into a non-profit organisation in 2021 based in BiH and the United States.<sup>179</sup> Its story began in 2006, when Bosnian-American visual artist Aida Šehović created a one-day performance at Baščaršija (Old Market Square in Sarajevo, BiH) on 11 July. The artist filled 923 porcelain coffee cups (bcs. *čildžani*) with coffee in memory of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. Performance name derives from the well-known Bosnian love song (bcs. *sevdalinka*) *Što te nema*<sup>180</sup> (translated as *Why are you not here? or Where have you been?*) as it was inspired by the widow from Srebrenica, who misses her husband the most over coffee (Hafner 2020). As mentioned previously, coffee drinking is one of the most important rituals of community and togetherness in Bosnian society. Accordingly, Šehović materialised the absence of the victims who could have been drinking coffee with their loved ones had they not been killed. The *Women of Srebrenica* warmly welcomed the artist's idea. The members of this association, including its founders Hajra Ćatić and Nura Begović, collected and donated the

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<sup>179</sup> ŠTO TE NEMA incorporated is a non-profit 501(c)(3) entity in the United States, officially registered in 2023, which has a parallel non-profit organisation in BiH, registered in 2022. [AŠ]

<sup>180</sup> The love song was written by a famous Mostar poet, Aleksa Šantić, in 1897. Šantić came from a Serbian family and chose to work for the interests of the Herzegovinian Serbs in the era of romantic nationalism. ŠTO TE NEMA naturally embodies the cultural interdependence with the other that is very common in the Balkan region (Jaugaitė 2024a). In 1981, the Bosnian singer Jadranka Stojaković made the song even more popular throughout Yugoslavia. The lyrics mark the absence of a loved one and ask why that person has not returned. The lyrical subject misses this person desperately. It seems that there is no way to escape the feeling of absence, as if this absence has become part of the lyrical subject's identity. Although the song sounds very sad and nostalgic, it has no direct connection with mass atrocities. In ŠTO TE NEMA, this absence refers to the absence of the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and the grief of their surviving family members.

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very first cups and became her most prominent supporters. The support of genocide survivors was vital for Šehović, who came from a different part of BiH (i.e., Banja Luka) and had no direct connection with Srebrenica.

Although Šehović did not initially intend to continue with ŠTO TE NEMA, it became a nomadic participatory monument that existed for the next 14 years (2007-2020, but in real-time only for 14 days—on 11 July each year) in various cities worldwide,<sup>181</sup> where Bosnian diaspora communities invited Šehović to reassemble the monument (Hafner 2020; Karabegović 2014). The imagined coffee ritual gathered the Bosnian and global community participants to remember Srebrenica's victims and survivors on 11 July, Srebrenica Memorial Day. In 2007, the monument in the shape of BiH<sup>182</sup> was symbolically erected at the United Nations headquarters<sup>183</sup> in New York. The third ŠTO TE NEMA (2008) arose in Tuzla (BiH), which remains a city where most of the victims and survivors of the Srebrenica genocide moved. The *Women of Srebrenica* were also founded in Tuzla. Naturally, they helped Šehović make the coffee, set it up and fill the cups. While Šehović remained increasingly in the background, she opened up more and more space for others to become part of the project (Hafner 2020). In addition, the monument grew each year as the number of cups increased.

ŠTO TE NEMA was always set up in squares, public spaces accessible for anyone to participate and lasted around 10 hours. Šehović no longer performed alone as she did in 2006. Instead, she involved volunteers and passers-by, inviting them to fill in the *fildžans* to commemorate not only the victims of the genocide but also the loved ones they had lost

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<sup>181</sup> Sarajevo (2006), New York (2007), Tuzla (2008), The Hague (2009), Stockholm (2010), Burlington (2011), Istanbul (2012), New York (2013), Toronto (2014), Geneva (2015); Boston (2016); Chicago (2017), Zürich (2018), Venezia (2019); and finally, Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre (2020).

<sup>182</sup> Only the very first ŠTO TE NEMA monuments were in the shape of BiH, others that followed did not have such a specific shape.

<sup>183</sup> The United Nations was highly criticised for failing to prevent Srebrenica's genocide as it took place at the UN-protected "safe area" (Woodward, 1995), so having ŠTO TE NEMA seemed a very telling decision.

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personally, creating a more personal relationship of understanding the loss. Passers-by abroad may probably never understand what it is like to lose dozens of family members in genocide, but thinking about the loved ones they have lost will help them come closer to understanding the pain of loss felt by those who have lost entire families. What helped to engage with passers-by was the fact that the monument dropped all national and religious symbols to create a very human experience, where the volunteers could make contact with passers-by and talk not only about the genocide but also about very ordinary things such as where they came from or coffee customs. For example, takeaway coffee in the United States is a very individualistic ritual—you usually take a giant cup of coffee and drink it yourself. In Italy, a small cup of *espresso* is often taken for a quick social interaction, appearing as a prelude to something else. In BiH, drinking coffee is an essential ritual for getting together. Šehović, her volunteers and the audience reproduced such a coffee ritual, in which the coffee remained undrunk because the victims could not come and join in. At the end of the day, the participants respected the victims, pursued the moment of silence, and then cleaned the cups.

2020 marked a turning point in ŠTO TE NEMA's history. Initially, Šehović planned to construct the monument in Belgrade (Serbia), but this proved challenging due to security issues [AŠ]. Simultaneously, Šehović received an invitation from the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre and genocide survivors and felt that she could not refuse to bring the monument to a place so crucial for the memory of Srebrenica. When the global COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020, it became clear that the Memorial Centre was the only place where the monument could actually be built: “once the pandemic began, and we got to the July and it was unfolding, I realised that we were protected. Because if we had stayed with our plan to Belgrade, nothing would happen, because then the government and the city will have a real reason to not give us permits, and they will do it last minute,” reflects

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Šehović [AŠ]. Eventually, the 2020 ŠTO TE NEMA, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, became the last living monument, explains Šehović:

I did not know that before, but I knew while it was happening, and afterwards, that once the cups touched the ground, like so the same land, grass, where men and women were separated, that something had to shift, because it's a different relationship with the object that used to build the monument, the cup, right to the land on which...to the site, to the actual site. So, something had to change. And that became also clear, because... I would say, 95% of the people who participated in making, building ŠTO TE NEMA in 2020 were mainly [...] people from Srebrenica directly, which was unusual: that hadn't happened before. [...] [B]ecause it was the pandemic, [...] people were not traveling and moving; the rules, and how many people can be at the commemoration in Srebrenica, were very, very strict. [...] [I]t was really mainly only the families from Srebrenica and the people who work at the Memorial Centre. So, the whole monument had different kind of weight. [...] [W]e didn't know this ahead of time, we couldn't predict this, right, we knew that there were limitations on how many people could be there. But we didn't know who was gonna be. And when we were building the monument, [...] it became clear that as people were placing the cups down, they were from Srebrenica, because they would name each cup, like for each person... so that had its own weight, and gravity to the whole monument. So, to me, it didn't make sense that now I take that from this site and put it somewhere else on the ground in the same way. And people from Srebrenica, [...] everybody just kept saying 'the cups returned home,' 'they returned home.' So, it became clear that they now belong there. [AŠ]

In our interview [AŠ], Šehović also reveals other reasons why the monument had to stop travelling in this form. In 2020, ŠTO TE NEMA had already collected more than 8,372 *čildžani*, as people kept donating more and more, and Šehović felt that she should not stop this process, and that was beautiful. However, it created huge challenges in terms of transport and price, so the monument was no longer sustainable. “[F]inally, logistically it became almost impossible to do it within one day. [...] [T]he last time when we set it up, it took us I think 14 or 15 hours to place all the cups down and make coffee. And then we couldn't wash it that day, we had to wash it the next day, which in reality in real life is actually impossible. If you're in a square, you can't [...] leave everything and come back the next day to wash. So, there's like real practical reasons,” shares Šehović [AŠ]. Therefore, the final iteration of ŠTO TE NEMA as a travelling monument was in 2020.



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Although the monument is no longer erected on the city squares, it continues to exist in other forms. For example, in 2021, with the support of the Bosnian community in St. Louis (USA), an exhibition, “Aida Šehović: ŠTO TE NEMA”, was held at the Laumeier Sculpture Park in the form of shelving units for coffee cups. In 2022, Šehović returned to BiH from the United States and presented the archive of the ŠTO TE NEMA monument (horizontal shelves with cups) at the *Spatium Memoriae* exhibition, which took place at the Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo from July to September 2022. Šehović decided to create a permanent version of ŠTO TE NEMA and place it in the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, together with other works of art dealing with the Srebrenica genocide:

I also felt that the Srebrenica Memorial Centre needs an artwork like this, a monument like this, that can bring relevance, and also hope, because I think it's a place of, it's really, really heavy when you go and visit, rightfully so because it has all these artifacts and documents [...]. But I always felt that it, maybe you'll be good to have something that kind of gives you hope, a little bit of hope. Not like fantasy, you know, but really hope in humanity more than anything else. And, and ŠTO TE NEMA managed to do that one as a living monument, right? Because it was always, very, obviously, it's serious, and it's hard and it's heavy. But at the same time, whenever we set it up and share, it was also very hopeful, because there were all kinds of people who were supporting it and part of it, and it was hopeful to see people from all over the world, adding and contributing to it, and sharing. And I'm hoping that that same kind of hope, can be [...] transferred there. So that when you go through the Memorial Centre and looking at the exhibitions that there is something, that's within ŠTO TE NEMA [...] makes you feel like you have hope and that makes you feel like you have agency [...]. So, it goes through the artwork to inspire you to actually do something. [AŠ]

The question thus arises as to how such a permanent monument will preserve the same charge, power, and effect. ŠTO TE NEMA became powerful precisely because it rejected traditional forms of remembrance, aiming instead for something different: genuinely inclusive and non-permanent. It is hard to imagine how one could move from a living monument to a permanent one without fundamentally changing its essence. A permanent version would likely need to diverge significantly from conventional remembrance practices to maintain the spirit of the original project. It might appear that ŠTO TE NEMA is moving in reverse: from an independent, nomadic initiative to a more stable, institutionalised project under the Srebrenica Memorial Centre, which may bring different side effects. However,

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Šehović is taking steps to remain in control of the project. To safeguard its legacy and integrity, ŠTO TE NEMA has become an official organisation in both the United States and BiH, providing a legal framework to protect the monument's original vision and values.

Šehović also notes that the Memorial Centre has evolved over the years, and they may both be ready for each other now [AŠ]. The artist is currently engaged in the process of conceptualizing new ideas for the permanent project. Over the years, she has proven her creativity and commitment to the project, but only the future will tell what will come of it.

Meanwhile, Šehović holds workshops with different communities and talks about the Srebrenica genocide to prevent similar atrocities, contributing to more inclusive education and community building in BiH and beyond.<sup>184</sup> Documentary director Mirko Pincelli recently created the film *Where Have You Been* (2024), produced by ŠTO TE NEMA, Inc., Pinch Media Film and the Post-Conflict Research Centre. The film tells the story of a nomadic monument and the people who contributed to it and reflects on the role of art in the aftermath of mass atrocities such as genocide (IMDb 2024). It premiered at an Academy Award Qualifying Film Festival and the 30th Sarajevo Film Festival on August 21 2024. Recently, Šehović collaborated with architect Arna Mačkić on the research project *Cups of Memory*, which aims “to decolonize the public memory of the Srebrenica Genocide in Dutch history and public space” (Kuma International 2024) through an art residency programme. Thus, ŠTO TE NEMA continues to write new chapters in its history and to fulfil its mission of genocide prevention in different ways.

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<sup>184</sup> See the official ŠTO TE NEMA Instagram account to know more:  
[https://www.instagram.com/stotenema\\_monument/](https://www.instagram.com/stotenema_monument/)



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**ŠTO TE NEMA in Chicago (2017) Manka Rabije © Aida Šehović**



**ŠTO TE NEMA in Zürich (2018) Sabine Roeck © Aida Šehović**



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**ŠTO TE NEMA in Venice Biennale (2019) Adnan Saciragic © Aida Šehović**



**ŠTO TE NEMA in Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre (2020)  
Paul Lowe © Aida Šehović**

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### 6.1.2 Commemorative performance 8372, its variations and epilogue by Benjamin Zajc

*In my world, I carry landscapes of guilt embedded in my origins.  
In 1995, 8372 lives were extinguished in the Srebrenica massacre.  
“What I miss most is morning coffee with my husband.”*

*I was born in 1997.  
In 2011, I visited an inherited military apartment in Serbia.  
Join me and throw 8372 grams of coffee into the bag of collective responsibility.*

This text introduced the participants to the one-time commemorative performance of Benjamin Zajc, which was motivated by his family history. Zajc’s great-grandfather served in the Yugoslav army, and his writings testify to his hatred of Bosniaks. As a result, Zajc considers him to have been on the side of the oppressors [BZ1]. Through 8372, Zajc takes responsibility for his relative’s actions and aims to remind his audience of what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995.<sup>185</sup> Additionally, Zajc wants to remind people of our fragile privileges during peacetime, which can be taken away anytime. In 2022, Zajc was a graduating dramaturgy and performing arts student at the academy, and 8372 became his final work for the performance subject, taught by Zala Dobovšek, who became his mentor.

The performance 8372 lasted 24 hours, split into three days (30 March-1 April 2022), and was shown from 10 am to 6 pm (for 8 hours each day). Before entering, the participants had to take a granite mortar and pestle that would later be used for graining coffee. Zajc chose a mortar instead of a coffee grainer because he wanted the audience to struggle [BZ2].

Grinding coffee beans with a granite mortar and pestle is hard, especially if you do it for

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<sup>185</sup> Zajc’s relationship with a deceased grandfather who indirectly participated in the genocide as a perpetrator embodies *post-memory* structure, explored by Marianne Hirsch. She describes it as: “a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a *consequence* of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove” (Hirsch 2012, 6). According to Hirsch, the new generation that has not directly experienced the traumatic past inherits the trauma and the type of (secondary) memories that their ancestors experienced, which affects them greatly on an emotional level. These experiences on the imaginary level are often transformed into creative works, through which the new generation becomes more capable of dealing with the burden of trauma. / I would like to thank my reviewer, Daniele Salerno, for reminding me of Hirsch’s work.



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many hours. Zajc did not practise it before the performance, so he was surprised at how difficult it was. As well as being physically demanding, rubbing the coffee beans strained his olfactory system. Zajc was inhaling a massive dose of caffeine, which, over time, was making him sick. Meanwhile, the audience could enjoy the coffee aroma: “I think that was really nice. [...] the smell of coffee really, like infused into the place, it stayed there. And then it was the general smell of coffee. And then each of them got their own private, fresh smell,” remembers Zajc [BZ1]. Additionally, the friction of stone and coffee beans obtained a powerful sound that reminded bone cracking, creating a particular atmosphere in the room. Zajc explains that the word ‘mortar’ in Slovenian (*možnar*) also means a cannon heavy siege artillery, which could relate to the horrific events in Srebrenica [BZ1]. The 8372 occurred in Ljubljana’s Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television basement. The author wanted to create an atmosphere of the shelter; therefore, he did not bother to move needless things and old furniture that were kept there. Zajc managed to use some of those objects for his performance. The set comprised a table covered with a burlap cloth, a lamp and six chairs around it. The coffee beans were placed in the centre of the table, and Zajc and his participants had a task to ground 8372 grams of coffee. “It is funny that if you entered when people [were] already inside, they did not know who the performer is, who is the main person [...] that was quite funny. But...I liked it. I liked that...the line is blurred, who is doing what now at this point. But of course, at one point, they all go out, and I stay inside. So, it is still clear. And my name is still signed there,” notes Zajc [BZ1].

People stayed for different time intervals and longer than Zajc expected. He confirmed that the average was around one hour. Therefore, he found the performance successful as he had rarely been in the room alone. “I think a lot of interesting moments actually happened because of it. Because different people react differently to such a performance,” explained Zajc [BZ1]. In the beginning, Zajc had an idea to tell the stories of Srebrenica victims and

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survivors. However, after an hour, he stopped because it paused the performance and the energy. After all, “the sound and the movement [of grinding beans] were very strong. And every time I spoke up, people stopped... So, then I decided...to be silent,” says Zajc [BZ1]. The audience could speak or ask something, but Zajc decided not to be the initiator. The silent moments were more relaxed and commemorative, and conversations reminded him of a dining table with loved ones. “To drink coffee with [a] husband means to be seated at the dining table,” highlighted Zajc [BZ1]. Hence, his performance was inspired by ŠTO TE NEMA and the exact quote of the same woman who misses her husband the most when having coffee. Primarily, Zajc had an idea to grain the coffee for ŠTO TE NEMA. “I was calculating how much coffee you need for one cup. And it was one gram, and she [Šehović] does the [number] of victims in Srebrenica, [which] is the [number] of cups. So that is the [number] of grams and the title...of my show,” remarked Zajc [BZ1]. Unfortunately, as the global COVID-19 pandemic emerged, coffee transportation seemed too complicated, and Šehović stopped constructing the ŠTO TE NEMA monument in 2020; the cooperation did not happen. Eventually, the coffee remained at Zajc’s, and it queried to do something with it.

Although Zajc treats 8372 as a unique and only performance of this kind, he presented several short versions. Due to positive critique and attention, the Maribor Theatre Festival invited Zajc to perform 8372 on 4 June 2022. Later, the academy in Ljubljana asked him to perform again in Ljubljana on 4 October 2022. According to the author, as the main event already happened, he named those two additional performances 8372/II and 8372/III. After all three performances, Zajc had around 10 kilograms of grained coffee. That motivated him to create the epilogue of 8372 called *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372 [Zgodbe kavne usedline/8372]*, which eventually took place on the 7 February 2023 on the Academy’s Performative Day. The epilogue was about drinking the ground coffee and conversing with strangers and acquaintances from the academy, reminding the audience about the privilege of

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having stable lives and not experiencing war atrocities. In one day, Zajc threw seven performances, which lasted 20-40 minutes. Participants had to register in advance, and the information brochure announced that five people would be hosted at once. However, in the last performances, Zajc accommodated up to 8 people. As usual, Zajc did not practise before his performance, so the first takes were about improvisation. I saw the first and the one before the last take, and they were pretty different, so each performance was a unique experience. Zajc greeted his guests at the table and offered them coffee. The place was once again a basement full of various things. A single desk lamp lit the room and the table, so it was pretty dark. On the table were plain white cups, a bowl of ground coffee, an old-fashioned electric hob and an unremarkable *džezva*. “I was thinking about the Bosnian *džezva* and Bosnian cups, and there could be a cigarette next to it, and Halawa [halwa] and all this stuff. But then it’s just faking it. [...] [I]f I would do the Bosnian [way], you know, cups and *džezva*. It would really be faking it ‘cause we don’t do it like that here [in Slovenia]. So, I didn’t think it was appropriate to make now a theatre scene and set design,” reflects Zajc [BZ2].

Some audiences were more active in chitchatting, and some were reserved; in these cases, Zajc had to put in more effort. Over coffee, Zajc told the participants about his grandmother, who is a psychic: she reads the grounds in the coffee cups. He then invites people to read the coffee cups together, where the performance usually gets darker, as he links what he sees in the coffee cups to the events in Srebrenica. “[I]f you have to talk about location, when you open the cup [...] [i]t’s always something with forest, it’s quite predictable, actually [...] unless it’s empty then: ‘You died,’ explains Zajc [BZ2], “[...] that’s something my grandma told me [...] it’s very practical. So, [...] when you turn the coffee [cup], you have [...] the grounds, [...] so your life will be told.” The owners of the cups that do not have grounds die as nothing can be read from their cups. Zajc used this death metaphor to talk about the victims of Srebrenica, telling us to imagine that one of us was dying at this table. Zajc also



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wanted to name the *džezva* to make it more emotionally attached to the participants, and sometimes the chosen name coincided with the names of Srebrenica victims, whose stories Zajc memorised. In those cases, he would tell those stories. For the participants without any context, Zajc also talked about his previous performance, from which the coffee came. Both 8372 and its epilogue were about the experience, the dynamics of feelings and raising awareness but not the education. “I don’t want to make a moralistic statement on [...] war killings—we all know that. [...] [B]ecause if I [...] make like a pedagogical message [...], people will revolt. [...] I just want people to remember of and be aware of our position in the whole situation, our position to the past and [...] the current time,” concludes Zajc [BZ2].

Although Zajc did not promote his works broadly and did not plan to perform abroad, he received an invitation from the Osijek Academy of Arts and Culture in Croatia. So, on 21 March 2023, he performed 8372/IV in Osijek during the 13th International Puppetry Festival *Lutkokaz*. Zajc was very curious about going to Croatia, which vividly recalls the recent war. In Osijek, the staging was different. As the mortars were heavy, he brought only four: one for himself and three for the audience. So, he performed 8372/IV for the festival audience (about 100 people), with three people who could swap places with the audience. However, in those 2 hours, he was joined only by ten people as they would not leave the table quickly; each stayed pretty long [BZ3]. “This time, I also decided to say the introductory words while I was preparing the table. So, the audience came in and saw the empty table, then I put a tablecloth, grinders, a bedside lamp and coffee on it while I talked about what I was going to do and why. When we were done (after 2 hours), I put everything away again and ended the performance with an empty table. I gave the grinded coffee to one of the professors, as memory of the performance,” explains Zajc [BZ3]. Although 8372 initially was a unique performance, its replicas spontaneously travelled around. The 8372 did not develop this further nor promote it more widely; however, the performer remains open to new invitations.

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8372 in the basement of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 30 March 2022 © Borut Krajnc from *Mladina* (Paukovič 2022)



8372 in the basement of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 30 March 2022 © Željko Stevanić (SIGLEDAL 2022)

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**8372 in the basement of the Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 30 March 2022 © Željko Stevanić (SIGLEDAL 2022)**





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### 6.1.3 Documentary drama play *My Thousand Old Land (A Song for BiH)* by Susan Moffat and Aida Salkić Haughton MBE

*[W]hat I tried to do is to bring everything to the most ordinary level that connects us all as human beings.* Susan Moffat [SM]

*My Thousand Old Land (A Song for BiH)* (MTYOL) documentary drama play<sup>186</sup> premiered at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme, England, on 11 July 2022, the Srebrenica Memorial Day. Over time, the length of the piece changed from 45 minutes to one hour and 15 minutes. So far (as of January 2025), different versions of this play have been performed 13 times at the New Vic Theatre and on tour in the UK (see Figure 5.3 in Chapter 5). Additionally, it was often live-streamed online worldwide, to BiH and local schools in the UK. MTYOL results from cooperation between the theatre director, Susan (Sue) Moffat, and communities and partnership engagement manager, Aida Salkić Haughton MBE, who met when Moffat presented another documentary drama play, *Yizkor* based on the testimonies of Holocaust survivors. Haughton herself could relate to those Holocaust eyewitnesses as she was a Bosnian War survivor who worked as a UN interpreter during the war and as a NATO interpreter after the war. That encounter inspired Moffat to start working on MTYOL and “make the space for Aida’s experience and the story of her [Bosnian] people,” [SM] which has been neglected. MTYOL became a co-creation piece between Moffat, Haughton, two Bosnian actresses, Katarina Kristić and Stasha Dukić, and Scottish actress Christina Bain, who had spent quite some time in BiH. Most importantly, MTYOL is a documentary drama play, meaning that theatre director Moffat conducted research, gathered facts, and collected verbatim testimonies from Bosnian War survivors, including Haughton and war crimes investigators. Therefore, the play is a mosaic of various collected individual stories that are masterfully blended together to represent the recent history of the Bosnian people.

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<sup>186</sup> Based on research, facts, and verbatim testimonies.

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The play employs various theatrical techniques to immortalise these stories, such as object and shadow theatre and traditional folk songs (lullabies and Bosnian love songs known as *sevdalinke*). Indeed, poetry,<sup>187</sup> folk melodies and local traditions became the play's sources of inspiration, ultimately contributing to the play's distinctive poetic form and texture.<sup>188</sup> Despite its complex and severe content, the play incorporates humour and sophisticated jokes to ensure the experience is not too overwhelming. Overall, the play remains hopeful, even when dealing with very dark subject matters.

The play takes a forensic archaeology approach, using replicas of personal items found in mass graves (such as a boot, a belt, and a hat) to bridge the gap between past trauma and present storytelling. Indeed, personal objects exhumed from the mass graves played a crucial role in identifying bodies before the use of DNA analysis was introduced in BiH. In some cases, even when the bodies were never found, these objects bore witness to the disappearance of individuals, and they also served as crucial evidence in court proceedings (Jugo 2017). Simultaneously, these objects are the poignant symbols of lost lives (Violi 2024), humanizing the dead and making their absence felt on stage. So, incorporating the reproductions of personal items on the stage adds a layer of authenticity and intimacy, urging the audience to confront the human cost of violence on a deeply personal level. The archaeologist Caroline Sturdy Colls also discusses the significance of the objects on stage:

[T]hose items are representing a person who is no longer there and whether or not we can relate to what happened in Bosnia [...], one thing that we can all relate to, are the things that we wear [...] they're the things that [...] we use to define our own identity [...]. So [...] when a person is no longer there, then obviously [...] they take on a completely different meaning and they're so powerful in the context of Bosnian

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<sup>187</sup> The play's title literally refers to the lyrics of *Jedna si, jedina/You Are the One and Only* written by Dino Merlin. It was the first (1992-1998) national anthem of BiH but later got rejected by Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat nationalist parties. Despite that many Bosniaks regard *Jedna si, jedina* as the national anthem as the current official anthem composed by Bosnian-Serb Dušan Šestić has no lyrics and appears purely instrumental. The preceding melody held Ottoman heritage influence (Pennanen 2014), and this probably did not satisfy the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat sides.

<sup>188</sup> See Annex 15 that reconstructs MTYOL's stage representations, connecting them to the sources of inspiration.

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genocide because for a lot of the mothers often [...] what they had left were the things that their family members left behind, or [...] they often had shoes, belts [...] shirts returned to them after [...] bodies had been found in mass graves. And so, hearing the voices of the mothers talking about [...] when she could no longer hold a child, but she can hold [...] his shirt or [...] jacket, those objects [...] suddenly take on a whole other meaning. [CSC]

It should be added that forensic markers are also used in the most recent versions of the play to present the post-war experience that many Bosnians went through while looking for the remains of their loved ones and to highlight the significant contributions of the International Commission on Missing Persons in the identification process. Apart from focusing on the most notorious genocide in Srebrenica, MTYOL sheds light on other neglected massacres across BiH (in Bijelina, Prijedor, Kozarac, Omarska, Banja Luka, Tuzla, and Sarajevo) committed mainly against Bosniaks and disloyal persons to VRS during the Bosnian War.

MTYOL also incorporates various items correlating to traditional Bosnian culture and everyday life, such as clothes, *džezva*, *fildžans* and traditional coffee grinder. “I didn’t want to introduce them [the unaware audience] to Bosnia by slaughter,” says Moffat, “I wanted to introduce them to Bosnia by [...] being some kind of weird travel agent: ‘It’s [...] got mountains and rivers and beautiful countryside and orchards and shiny peppers and sweet tomatoes and coffee, mmm coffee everywhere’ [SM]. In fact, coffee has become one of the primary devices used to engage with the audience and recreate an image of everyday life in BiH. Moffat uses coffee customs to evoke the idyll of everyday life, shattered by war and its atrocities beyond our control [SM]. By doing so, the director aims to grasp the moments when humanness meets inhumanity and show the complete picture of Bosnia—both good and evil, demonstrating that hate crimes could happen anywhere. Coffee well unpacks Bosnian identity, the spirit of the neighbourhood, enjoyment, therapy and quality time Bosnians experience while having coffee together. At the same time, coffee appears as a medium to reach the audience members. During the interview [SM, AH1], Moffat and Haughton told a story of a young man from Sudan who saw MTYOL and easily related to the coffee scene,

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which reminded him of life in his home country. Although coffee is not rooted in British culture, Moffat notes that the audience could relate to tea drinking and reading the tea leaves [SM], while the play's protagonists read the coffee cups. Thus, the semiotics of drinks created on stage bring the audience closer to the protagonists and their experiences.

The previously mentioned Moffat's documentary drama play *Yizkor* on the Holocaust used food to create a similar relatable experience for the audience. "[I]t was all about the food and the ritual, the using the Jewish calendar, as a way of moving through the stories... preparations, peeling apples, just the ordinary things. That doesn't matter whether we're of that faith or culture; these are the things we all do," explains Moffat [SM]. In MTYOL, everything revolves around coffee; however, "something sweet to welcome the guests" is also offered to a few spectators creating a more intimate connection. Additionally, Moffat pays attention to the Muslim calendar as many atrocities in BiH happened during religious holidays when Bosniaks were more relaxed and vulnerable, spending time with their families [SM]. By introducing beautiful traditions and customs of Ramadan and Bajram (relating it to Halloween), MTYOL aims to fight Islamophobia and xenophobia. Given that, on November 8, 2023, a bite-sized version of MTYOL was staged at the Islamophobia conference in Bolton during Islamophobia Awareness Month.

MTYOL sends a message against hatred and warns that hate crimes can occur anywhere if not prevented. Consequently, the play is both educational and informative. Indeed, both Haughton and Moffat engage extensively in educational and community work. Haughton shared her personal war experience with many local communities in the UK for many years. She also accompanied different groups on educational trips to BiH to learn about war crimes there, organised by the YMCA North Staffordshire and *Remembering Srebrenica* organisations. For these services, she was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) in 2021. Moffat is the founder-director of the outreach

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department and award-winning initiative *New Vic Borderlines*, which uses theatre for social good and community building. Also, MTYOL is a part of the *Borderlines*. Moffat used to be very active in local and regional politics.<sup>189</sup> Although she resigned from the Labour Party, Moffat is currently involved in community outreach initiatives,<sup>190</sup> volunteering with local charities focused on mental health and homelessness, advocating for social issues such as period poverty, and fostering connections among grassroots organisations to drive positive change in her community. Therefore, Haughton and Moffat appear as outstanding peacebuilding and social justice ambassadors, using their experiences and platforms to advocate for positive change in their communities.

On June 19, 2023, in cooperation with Professor of Conflict Archaeology and Genocide Investigation, Caroline Sturdy Colls, Haughton, and Moffat launched a very ambitious *My Thousand Year Old Challenge* (MTYOC) project inspired by the play. MTYOC primarily aims to introduce learning about the Srebrenica Genocide into the national UK school curriculum, which mainly focuses on the Second World War and Holocaust experiences. Sturdy Colls, Moffat and Haughton engage with policymakers to raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide and emphasise the importance of educating about it to prevent the occurrence of hate and xenophobia in the UK context.

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<sup>189</sup> Moffat was a Labour Councillor on Newcastle Borough Council, Women's Officer for Newcastle-Under-Lyme Constituency Labour Party; Chair of Unite Community Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffs Branch; Vice Chair and Constituency Labour Party (CLP) representative on the West Midlands Regional Labour Party Board and Chair of North Staffs MIND.

<sup>190</sup> Currently (January 2025), Moffat is a Chair of *Period Power* (a registered charity raising awareness of and addressing period poverty and empowering girls and women), Treasurer of *People's History Association North Staffordshire*, Trustee for *North Staffs MIND* (a national mental health charity), Trustee of C2CH (*Connect 2 Combat Homelessness*, registered charity raising awareness of and addressing homelessness).



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**NEW VIC**  
borderlines

**NEW VIC**

**My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)**

Written by Aida Haughton MBE and Sue Moffat  
Based on survivor testimonies from the genocide and war crimes that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and traditional folk songs and poetry

**Mon 23 January 2.15pm & 7.30pm**

**Box Office 01782 717962    newvictheatre.org.uk**



A story of the search for truth, justice and hope through three generations of women. What does it mean to have roots, to feel the connection of the land, mountains, rivers, trees; where deep song, music and poetry beats as your heart and the blood in your veins flows like a timeless river through a land for centuries?

And then, hate spills into the soil, the trees, the rivers. What new songs can be sung, and verses made?

Before reconciliation comes acknowledgment, before hope, truth.

*'And the questioned gave then a prompt reply,  
Bosnia – forgive me – there is a land,  
Both barren And barefoot – forgive me –  
Both cold and hungry –  
but more than that – Forgive me –  
Defiant – through A dream'  
Mak Dizdar*



Christina Bain    Stasha Dukic    Katarina Kristic

Poster of *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* dedicated to the Holocaust Memorial on 23 January, 2023



Scene from *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)*, © Andrew Billington  
Photography taken from *The Guardian* (Butterwick 2022)



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Scene from *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* © Andrew Billington  
Photography taken from *The Guardian* (Butterwick 2022)



Scene from *My Thousand Year Old Land (A Song for BiH)* © Andrew Billington  
Photography taken from *The Guardian* (Butterwick 2022)

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### 6.2 Comparing Selected Art Initiatives

In order to summarise the first part of the chapter and compare the three alternative commemorative practices, Table 6.1 illustrates each initiative's settings and objectives.

Meanwhile, Table 6.2 highlights each initiative's public engagement, participation, strengths and weaknesses.

	<b>ŠTO TE NEMA</b>	<b>8372</b>	<b><i>My Thousand Year Old Land</i></b>
<b>Creators</b>	Activist <b>Aida Šehović</b>	Dramaturge, critic and performer working at the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre <b>Benjamin Zajc</b>	Director at <i>New Vic Borderlines</i> but also very active in the regional public (NGOs) and political sphere <b>Susan Moffat</b> and Communities & Partnership Engagement Manager <b>Aida Salkić Haughton MBE</b>
<b>Form</b>	<b>Day-long nomadic monument</b>	<b>One-time performance</b>	<b>Documentary drama play</b>
<b>Place/space</b>	Various city squares around the world	Ljubljana, Maribor, Osijek	The New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme but also non-theatre space when on tour + live streaming globally
<b>Time</b>	<b>2006-2020 on July 11/</b> continues existing in different forms now	<b>30 March-1 April 2022 one-time performance</b> June and Oct 2022 other short versions / Feb 2023 epilogue / a tour to Croatia in March 2023	<b>11-12 July 2022 (premiere)</b> 23 January 2023 x2 7-8 July 2023 11-14 July 2023 on tour 8 November 2023 11 July 2024 x2
<b>Target Audience</b>	Local (Srebrenica, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), national (BiH) ► transnational	Local (Slovene) ► becoming regional (Croatian) ► and international (Osijek festival involved foreign participants)	Local (British) but created for everyone
<b>Goals and objectives</b>	Raise awareness about the Srebrenica genocide, honour the victims and prevent potential atrocities	Question his and collective limits of responsibility for the Srebrenica atrocities	Tell the stories. Educate British/ Western audiences about the Srebrenica genocide and other atrocities in BiH, prevent hatred
<b>Methods and techniques</b>	Filling in mugs with coffee, materializing the number of victims enabling all the senses, embrace coffee ritual, to talk about the absence	Making the audience feel uncomfortable, inviting them to act and think, creating a collective experience.	Utilising objects, telling stories, and singing songs. Invite the audience on a virtual tour of BiH.
<b>Plans for the future</b>	Preserve the ŠTO TE NEMA's legacy and create a permanent monument at the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre	No plans, unless the invitation arrives	Performing at the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre and other places in BiH (e.g., Cazin, Sarajevo) in July, 2025

**Table 6.1: Main settings and objectives of the selected initiatives**

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	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>ŠTO TE NEMA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly participative and engaging: the participant is invited to fill in the coffee cup and is informed about what is happening;</li> <li>• Involved all senses;</li> <li>• Happened in a public space so that everyone can join;</li> <li>• Used to be nomadic, performed in many different places;</li> <li>• Provide online engagement;</li> <li>• Could be placed anywhere;</li> <li>• ŠTO TE NEMA continues by organising educational workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passersby with no context may struggle to understand what is going on;</li> <li>• Logistic challenges and high expenses of transportation;</li> <li>• Unsustainability;</li> <li>• The iterations of the nomadic monument have ended.</li> </ul>
<b>8372 variations and Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly participatory: participants sit at the table, engage and have a collective experience.</li> <li>• 8372/IV's audience could become participants if they wished;</li> <li>• Involve all senses;</li> <li>• Can be placed easily anywhere.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants/ 8372/IV spectators with no context may struggle to understand what is going on;</li> <li>• Limited audience: art enthusiasts and professionals;</li> <li>• Limited in number.</li> </ul>
<b>My Thousand Year Old Land</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-explanatory: easily understandable;</li> <li>• Highly educational;</li> <li>• Online broadcasting to local schools and more expansive audiences abroad;</li> <li>• Developed into <i>My Thousand Year Old Challenge</i> project, which aims to introduce teaching about the Srebrenica Genocide in UK schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited audience: mostly seasoned theatre attendees and targeted audience;</li> <li>• Limited level of participation (limited by the form of the play);</li> <li>• Adapted for the Western audience; nevertheless, lacking some broader context.</li> </ul>

**Table 6.2: Strengths and weaknesses of analysed art initiatives, their engagement and participation**

### 6.2.1 The Process of Encoding Art Initiatives by Applying Hall's (1973) Model

To understand the selected art initiatives, it is crucial to explore how and in which context they were created. This subsection analyses the background and infrastructure in which artists encode art content by exploring interviews with artists, information published online and employing an interpretive synthesis approach. Table 6.3 presents the most significant results, which are summarised below.



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	ŠTO TE NEMA nomadic monument	8372 commemorative performance, its variations and epilogue	<i>My Thousand Year Old Land</i> documentary drama play
<b>Technical infrastructure</b>			
<b>Dependency on institutions</b>	Independent; currently became an organisation itself [AŠ]	Highly independent but supported by academy [BZ1, ZD]	Highly independent [AH2] but set in a theatre/ later performing outside the theatre as well
<b>Technical skills</b>	Public and socially engaged visual art, project management, public relations, community building, storytelling (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024a)	Performative art skills, audience management and engagement, storytelling [BZ1, BZ2, BZ3]	Research, documentation, writing, co-creation, theatre art skills, including object, shadow theatre, storytelling public relations, and social media management [SM, AH1, AH2]
<b>Communication abilities</b>	Visual, person-to-person, and, lately, comprehensive digital communication	Person-to-person communication mainly for the inner circle of the academy [BZ1]	Theatre public relations, including person-to-person and digital communication
<b>Initiative's frequency</b>	15 years, once a year	One-time	Played 13 times
<b>Scale</b>	Wide and transnational	Very small, and local	Limited by theatre space but expanded by performing in non-theatre spaces while on tour and internet live streaming
<b>Audience size and reach</b>	Sufficiently broad, includes local and global community	Small and intimate: mainly acquaintances and art professionals	Theatre and non-theatre audience, practically packed auditorium
<b>Imaginable overall impact</b>	Raising awareness locally and globally	Raising awareness on a tiny scale	Raising awareness locally, regionally and globally
<b>Relations of production</b>			
<b>Professional ideologies</b>	Commitment to storytelling and genocide recognition, emerging from personal experiences, highly focused on community and its engagement, maintaining personal and cultural authenticity [AŠ, BZ1, BZ2, SM, AH1, AH2]		
<b>Institutional knowledge within the art world</b>	Her network and extensive experience in the art field have grown over the years. She has received international scholarships, collaborated with artistic and cultural institutions and has been supported by various international foundations (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024a)	Personal network of arts professionals, including art students and puppeteers [BZ1, BZ Facebook message]	Developed a robust network of people from different sectors and organisations to collaborate and apply for funding together [AH2]
<b>Collaborative dynamics</b>	Dependent on the local communities where the monument was set up.  Received much support from the survivors' association <i>Women of</i>	Invited to additionally perform at the Maribor Theatre Festival, the Academy in Ljubljana and the International Puppet Festival <i>Lutkokaz</i>	<i>[...] [W]e work with so many different partners [...] to produce something as good. And as relatable to everybody in the wider community is, you need to have that input from different experts from different sides [...]</i>

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	<i>Srebrenica</i> ; due to that and the matter of sensitive topic, always feels responsible towards the victims’ communities [AŠ]	in Osijek (Croatia) [BZ1, BZ2]	<i>with the authorities, with police, with the army [...] Different charities [...] literally anybody and everybody, [...] who we think might contribute or they think they might contribute and also survivors [...] [AH2]</i>
<b>Funding sources</b>	Dependent on donors (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024d)	Very modest support from the academy [ZD]	Dependent on winning projects, public money, donors [AH2]
<b>Frameworks of knowledge</b>			
<b>Definitions and assumptions about their target group</b>	Universal, but going in layers: the survivors and their families, the Bosniaks, all Bosnians, and the international community (Canadian Museum for Human Rights 2021)	Universal: <i>I actually didn’t have a particular target audience in mind. Never actually thought of it. I knew the majority of my audience will be art professionals, but at the end, a lot of “non-artist“ people visited it as well.</i> [BZ Facebook message]	Universal: <i>I think it’s for anyone and everyone [...] this is for audiences who don’t know anything.</i> [SM]
<b>Cultural background and personal experiences</b>	Bosniak from Banja Luka, who emigrated to the US due to the war in BiH (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024a) [AŠ]	Slovene, whose great-grandfather’s history weighs heavily on him.	Haughton: Bosniak from Cazin, a survivor of the Bosnian War, worked as an interpreter for the UN, emigrated to the UK, was/ is involved in different charities (including <i>Remembering Srebrenica</i> ) and community work, awarded MBE [AH2]
	Šehović is a founder and caretaker of ŠTO TE NEMA for nearly two decades (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024a).	Pursues career as dramaturge and art critic [BZ1]	Moffat: British theatre director active in the regional public and political sphere (D4D 2024), helping displaced people in the UK [SM]
<b>Beliefs, ideological views</b>	Leftist ideological stance: in favour of social justice, advocate human rights, and criticise oppressive power structures, gender-sensitive, against hatred, giving agency and voice, standing up for the victims, evoking empathy [AŠ, BZ1, BZ2, SM, AH1, AH2]		
<b>Education and training</b>	BA from the University of Vermont and MFA from Hunter College (ŠTO TE NEMA 2024a)	BA and MA in dramaturgy and performance art at the Ljubljana Academy for Theatre, Radio, Film and Television [BZ1]	Moffat: Research Fellow at Keele University (D4D 2024); Fellow in Holocaust Education at the Imperial War Museum [SM]
			Haughton: BA in Modern and International History at Staffordshire University [AH2]

**Table 6.3: Illustrating the process of encoding art initiatives by applying Hall's (1973) model**

Even if the formats of selected initiatives differ, they have much in common, and coffee is not the only common denominator. All three initiatives are products of independent art.

However, 8372 and MTYOL were held in traditional art venues: the academy and the theatre.

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Despite that, the interviews [BZ1, ZD, AH2] testify to the creative independence of the artists. Nevertheless, the initiatives are constrained and determined by limited funding.<sup>191</sup> As general experience in the art field shows, artists must compete and waste their energy on bureaucracy to receive modest funding, and they mainly depend on donors. Funding applications must comply with guidelines and requirements and always be ‘relevant’ and ‘sustainable’ [AH2]. Haughton [AH2] does not necessarily see this in a negative light. According to her, cooperation with different partners only enriches the project, making it more relatable and relevant.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, Haughton explains that in the British art market, it is impossible to “survive being on [...] your own” [AH2] as art institutions experience severe pressure, with many losing funding and closing.<sup>193</sup> The difference between ŠTO TE NEMA and the other two initiatives is that ŠTO TE NEMA is a long-term initiative that has done much work, gained much trust and got a significant outreach. In recent years, it has become an organisation<sup>194</sup> with more people involved aiming to protect its legacy, but also to become more independent and attract more benefactors. While in BiH, ŠTO TE NEMA is simply a non-profit organisation, in the United States, it is a registered incorporated non-profit organisation, meaning sponsors who support it receive a tax deduction. However,

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<sup>191</sup> “[...] [A]t the end, it was financial, but it was a good idea.” [BZ1] / “Now, of course, if I had the budget, and [...], a lot of money and room, I would not wash the cups for another group, [...] I would leave them on the table and we would... maybe make something would happen. You could read out of another person’s cup and stuff it could develop, [...] but I can’t buy 50 cups and then store them somewhere. So, I guess it’s [...] the same with the first one [8372]. [...] I can [could] only have five people in the audience because I only have money for five grounding things [mortars] [...].” [BZ2] / “[...] [T]he budget of these performances [...] it’s less than 100 euros. [...] But of course, when he was invited to the festival, they covered the costs and everything.” [ZD]

<sup>192</sup> “[Y]ou shouldn’t be doing things on your own because you’re not expert in everything. You can be expert in marketing, but not in everything. And for you to produce something as good. And as relatable to everybody in the wider community is, you need to have that input from different experts from different sides.” [AH2]

<sup>193</sup> “There’s also pressure that we need to... Survive as [...] an institution because others have been closed. [...] After let’s say 20-30 years of practise. You know something can happen to them. What’s the difference with us? So, we had to make itself relevant all times [...] and also. Sustainable [...]” [AH2]

<sup>194</sup> “So, we were formed on October 18, 2021 [...] but we waited for this [...] 501(c)(3) status; we only got [it] in January of this year [2023]. [...] And then the organisation here [in BiH] was formed in the fall [2022].” [AŠ]

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being incorporated also means much responsibility and work in reporting expenditures, as

Šehović explains:

Incorporated, means you're forming a legal entity. And then if you are a nonprofit, then it's a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity. So, 501(c)(3) is a special status given by the US IRS, by the US Tax Department. [...] It's a legal status, [...] you also have to get approval. There's accountability that comes with it [...]. So, part of that accountability means that we are accountable to the government to be the nonprofit [...] so, financially, everything has to be transparent and publicly online. ...Shared at the end of the year, and then also [...] all the fundraising, all the donations in the US become tax deductible for the people giving the money. [...] [I]n Bosnia here, we also a non-profit organisation, but here [...] the laws haven't been developed that sophisticated yet. Yeah, so there's no benefit for donors here. Like it's not tax deductible, it doesn't exist here. [...] [In BiH] there's no tax benefit and [...] it doesn't make difference to give [to donate] or not. [AŠ]

All the creators emphasise their responsibility towards the affected communities and their representation.<sup>195</sup> Also, ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL highly collaborated with various survivors. Since the very beginning of the project, ŠTO TE NEMA has been highly supported by the *Women of Srebrenica*. Simultaneously, MTYOL worked with the *Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves*. Both Šehović [AŠ] and Haughton [AH2] remark that cooperation with these particular associations was random and unplanned. As neither Šehović, Moffat, Haughton, nor Zajc have a direct connection to Srebrenica, they aim to ensure that the victims receive their voice and remain careful about how they talk about it. For example, ŠTO TE NEMA first targets the survivors and their families, and only then does it consider other Bosniaks, all Bosnians, and the international community as the final target layer. ŠTO TE NEMA is for everybody (Canadian Museum for Human Rights 2021), but first, it is for the victims and survivors. For the MTYOL team, victims and survivors also occupy the top place; the only difference might be that besides the Srebrenica genocide,

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<sup>195</sup> “And to be respectful, of course, it's really important to be clear about your message. And to actually execute it.” [BZ1] / “So, you know, for us the most important thing was that survivors were happy. If you know what I mean. Like happy with how we presented things.” [AH2] / “I felt a huge responsibility for the stories that we were telling. I had a I felt a huge responsibility to responsibility to say it how they said it.” [SD] / “[...] [I]t felt like, ‘Okay, if the survivors of the genocide are telling me or asking me, ‘you should come,’ because I was never invited to the Memorial Centre before. I felt it was my duty to go there.” [AŠ]



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MTYOL also focuses on other war crimes committed during the Bosnian war (the siege of Sarajevo, massacres in the north-west and finally in the north-east of the country). Generally, all three initiatives consider themselves universal and do not specifically distinguish target groups. Indeed, the individuals and groups involved are not merely passive audiences. Through given agency and participation, they become actors of memory that have the potential to transmit, shape and preserve represented narratives. Moreover, they can be considered as *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019), indirectly connected to the Srebrenica genocide. That includes eyewitnesses, bystanders to the events, and even participants from abroad who engage and witness the genocide through art initiatives. By adapting to each context where the initiatives occur, the artists aim to demonstrate that atrocities can happen everywhere and emphasise the importance of being prepared to resist hate crimes.

It is reasonable to assume that the artists share similar inclusive, people/community-centred, justice-driven values. They fight against hatred and injustice,<sup>196</sup> xenophobia and Islamophobia,<sup>197</sup> advocate for human rights, evoke empathy for the victims and inform local and/or global audiences about the Srebrenica genocide in order to raise awareness,<sup>198</sup> but also provide hope and empowerment.<sup>199</sup> Also, all the authors are gender-sensitive,<sup>200</sup> meaning they acknowledge gender identity roles and their representations in artistic expression. They highlight the role of women who lost their loved ones in the genocide in the post-conflict situation. As mentioned, ŠTO TE NEMA and 8372 were inspired by a woman who misses her husband the most when having coffee without him. In MTYOL, women are the only

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<sup>196</sup> “[...] [F]ighting hate, you know, and hate unfortunately prevails everywhere in every part of society.” [AH2]

<sup>197</sup> “[...] [T]his is working against [...] fear from different and you know foreign if you like.” [AH2]

<sup>198</sup> “[...] [T]o remind people have what happened.” [BZ1]

<sup>199</sup> “[...] [M]akes you feel like you have hope [...] and that makes you feel like you have agency [...]” [AŠ]

<sup>200</sup> Most of the artists are women themselves. In the case of Zajc, his works are no less sensitive than those of Šehović, Haughton and Moffat, since the stories of women survivors play a central role in both performances, while the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* also emphasise the role of his grandmother in the coffee-making process.

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protagonists because men have been massacred, leaving them to carry the burden of life alone. Through the use of objects that belonged to the massacred men, such as the belt, shoe and hat, Moffat depicts the *presence of absence*.<sup>201</sup> Thus, the art initiatives invite the audience to consider the role of women as key actors in the post-conflict situation, who have been treated as passive subjects by Western media and ingrained patriarchal traditions. Also, the portrayal of motherhood refers to any woman who has children and has experienced their loss (in real life or even hypothetically). The selected initiatives, therefore, ally with fundamental, forward-looking values embedded in their content and serve as a tool in peace-making processes. As mentioned above, MTYOL creators have already developed a complementary MTYOC project to approach the policymakers, inform them about the Srebrenica genocide and conduct hate crime prevention. ŠTO TE NEMA runs on-call educational workshops to pursue the same goals. Zajc's 8372 was commemorative and awareness-raising but not educational [BZ2].

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<sup>201</sup> Moffat and Haughton emphasised this notion of the *presence of absence* during our live and online conversations. It could be related to the German film historian Thomas Elsaesser's (2014) formula of "Absence as Presence, Presence as Parapraxis." Elsaesser developed the concept of "parapraxis" to analyse the New German cinema (from the 1960s to the 1980s) and its (mis)representations of the Holocaust. He argued that for many years after the Holocaust (mainly until the 1990s), the Holocaust theme and Jewish characters were absent from German cinema. Nevertheless, Elsaesser tried to explore the absence of these representations and their existence behind the screen in various ways, as slips of the tongue or parapraxis. "Performed failure" thus establishes another dimension—hypothetical, counterfactual or virtual (an "as if" mode)—by which the films communicate with the spectator who is asked to recognize (in the "as if" and in the "not seen") the presence of something that is necessarily absent", explains Elsaesser (2014, 13). In all the art initiatives I have selected, the artists deliberately perform *absence* in order to bring the victims to *presence*: the *absence* of the victims in the coffee ritual encapsulates melancholia, while the participatory art initiatives invite everyone to join the collective (transnational) mourning, to become active witnesses. While the perpetrators aimed to erase more than 8,000 (mainly) Bosniak men from history, the artists aim to enable the victims to be remembered locally/regionally and even transnationally. / Diana Taylor's (2020) study *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence* on the power of performance art also strongly aligns with the theme of the absence/presence of the Srebrenica victims in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. Taylor conceptualises *¡presente!* as an engaged *presence* of participation in a certain act (collective remembrance, in this case), which is not just physical but also political and ethical. In this context, the act of drinking coffee becomes a "declaration of presence; the "ethical imperative," as Gayatri Spivak calls it, to stand up to and speak against injustice. *¡Presente!* always engages more than one" (Taylor 2020, 4), so in Zajc's performance we have a group of people who are *¡presentes!* embodying engagement through performance in memory of those who were killed and forcibly disappeared in Srebrenica. Simultaneously, the participants' presence actively counteracts the absence and erasure of more than 8,000 people. I would like to thank my reviewer Daniele Salerno for bringing Taylor's concept to my attention.

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Artists have ensured that their initiatives are engaging and participatory. 8372 and ŠTO TE NEMA are entirely participatory, inviting the audience to be active (grind the coffee and pour the cups). Their participation is essential because the artistic idea (to grind 8372 grams of coffee or construct a large monument) would be impossible without it. The play's format limits MTYOL's participation capacity, but spectators can get involved in Q&A sessions and discussions that often occur after the play. Yet Moffat does not underestimate the importance of theatre: "theatre is special...It's a group of people who don't know each other, come into a space and sit next to each other. And then they hear a story together, and they feel things and they laugh, and they cry all at the same time. And for me, that is the absolute essence of what it is to be human" [SM]. Haughton only adds that "[...] the whole point of theatre is for people to come and engage with it within the theatre" [AH2]. Thus, they see theatre as a space of engagement. However, it is essential to note that MTYOL was also performed outside the traditional theatre space (e.g., community centre, museum, town hall). On the other hand, it kept the play's format, automatically creating a limited level of participation determined by that format.

Nevertheless, to increase inclusion and participation, the MTYOC team developed accompanying workshops and educational kits, consisting of the *Buttons Game*<sup>202</sup> and *Rescuing the Names*. "[W]e're looking at ways to bring archaeological methodologies and approaches into dialogue with documentary theatre in order to develop a workshop called

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<sup>202</sup> Sue Moffat developed the *Buttons Game* as part of her fellowship with the Imperial War Museums. The *Buttons Game* is an interactive activity designed to simulate the processes that can lead to genocide, emphasizing the importance of categorisation, exclusion, and dehumanisation. Participants have to sort buttons and other items (representing people or groups) and then make decisions about how to organise them, reflecting societal divisions. The game progresses through 10 (then 8) stages of the Holocaust and genocide. First, the participants create a "perfect society." Then, they introduce a "threat," and finally make decisions about exclusion and extermination, mirroring historical genocides. The point of the game is to illustrate how small actions can escalate into atrocities, and to encourage reflection on ways to counter these steps. Now, Moffat and Haughton are using this game to address the Holocaust and genocide in order to talk about ongoing hate crimes around the world. / Information provided by Haughton via WhatsApp conversation, 7 and 13 October, 2024.

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*Rescuing the Names*, which we will develop for schools and a variety of educational settings in order to teach more about Bosnian genocide through the physical evidence that was left behind,” explains principal MTYOC investigator Sturdy Colls [CSC]. Additionally, MTYOC has prepared interactive toolkits for pupils and teachers to facilitate education, making it more accessible. Thus, in addition to creating a highly educational documentary play, its creators aim to contribute to the UK school curriculum. These efforts align perfectly with the UK’s emphasis on practical, hands-on learning.

### 6.2.2 Multimodal Art Analysis: Exploring Sensorial Realms

Given the multimodal nature of art initiatives, it is crucial to understand how each mode influences the artwork and contributes to its overall meaning. Each mode is just as important on its own as in combination with the others. To a certain extent, all selected artworks appeal to all the senses (sight, smell, taste, hearing, touch, vestibular, kinesthetic) to attract attention and fascinate the viewer/participant, encouraging further engagement and creating a unique experience. Each mode also contributes to the particular atmosphere that communicates or infers certain feelings and emotions (Carabelli 2019), facilitating a sense of relatability.

In an era of screens and tabs, **vision** became probably the most fundamental sense. Visuality strongly affects public opinion and fosters a sense of belonging (Bleiker 2018). Undoubtedly, it plays a significant role in initiatives’ communication. The size of the ŠTO TE NEMA monument, consisting of 8,372 *filđžani*, impresses. Similarly, the large pile of coffee on a table covered with a burlap cloth in 8372 intrigues the viewer. In this way, Šehović and Zajc visualise the number of victims. The media and memorials usually depict the victims as numbers, but ŠTO TE NEMA and 8372 chose a more delicate and emotional technique. Šehović remarked that not every victim might be found, but everyone has their own cup within ŠTO TE NEMA (Canadian Museum for Human Rights 2021). So, the monument is not only collective but very personalised as well. Although every *filđžan* is the same size,

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they differ aesthetically: they have different colours, designs, and motives. Šehović does not use atrocities to shock the audience but rather enables reconciliatory visuality: the coffee ritual as a way of gathering and sharing. Nor does Zajc; his design is very minimalistic. A small lamp contributes to the shelter's cosy and slightly mysterious atmosphere. To strengthen the level of engagement, MTYOL employs different theatre techniques, including object puppetry and shadow theatre. Using the victims' personal belongings allows MTYOL to tell their stories and create a relatable experience for the viewer. So, all three initiatives represent the victims as ordinary people so that the audience can relate to them as people among them. "[O]ne key thing that I learned from it [being a fellow in Holocaust Education at the Imperial War Museum] was the importance of not re-victimizing the victims, of recognizing that before people become victims, they're just ordinary people," remarks Moffat [SM]. In addition, artworks highlight the absence of the murdered. Depiction of objects connected with everyday life (such as coffee cups, *džezva*, and clothes) helps portray the absence in a very physical, not only symbolic, way. All initiatives, particularly MTYOL and *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, highlight the importance of ordinary things and privileges that could be easily disturbed and lost.

The olfactory sensation can evoke memories, taking us back in time. So, it plays no less important role in all initiatives.<sup>203</sup> The **smell** of coffee only intensifies the art experience, adding emotional depth. Even though Haughton's cousin was watching the live stream, she could not help but notice the smell: "[...] one of my cousins [...] said, 'Oh my God, like the coffee and all this, like it [...] was so well portrayed that I felt like smell of it,' [...] like, 'I could just smell it. Like, I just felt like having some,' you know, even that was like through a live stream" [AH2]. Zajc acknowledges that smell played a significant role in 8372: "I

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<sup>203</sup> "And of course, also the smell, which is very important thing for some... experiencing some performance or something like this." [ZD]

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thought, the smell of the coffee. [...] It really has a really powerful like...a... not message but [the] atmosphere it creates” [BZ1]. “All the reactions I received focused [...] on the [...] smell of the coffee,” Zajc remarks on performances in Osijek [BZ3]. While constructing the ŠTO TE NEMA monument, the coffee aroma diffuses in the air and enchants participants and passers-by. As coffee remains undrunk, the **taste** remains imaginary and transcendental: the participants cannot try the coffee because they prepared it for the ones who passed away; however, the guests, the victims, cannot be present and drink coffee.

In contrast to ŠTO TE NEMA, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* allowed to drink coffee, but the taste of coffee is another matter. “He [Zajc] said that the taste is disaster. Because it’s not fine grind [...] but on the other hand, this is the result of what we [did previously in 8372]... I mean, if we were sloppy, it’s our problem now to drink: drink what you, you know, what you did, I mean the coffee,” concludes Dobovšek [ZD]. Haughton always makes sure she treats their audience well: “[...] Aida was so great both times we’ve done the play. She’s made this lovely Bosnian food for guests and for people to eat and enjoy. And she would feel deprived [...] if you didn’t do that” [SM]; “That’s the least I can do. That’s my way of saying thanks,” answers Haughton [AH1]. After the play was shown on 11 July 2024, Haughton shared this message with me: “[...] we served Bosnian coffee and Bosnian apple pie... needless to say, people loved it.”<sup>204</sup> Notably, several audience members are offered Bosnian sweets during the play, specifically during the coffee scene.<sup>205</sup> Hospitality is part of Bosnian tradition, and that kind of spirit had to be reflected in the MTYOL.<sup>206</sup>

The **sound** adds one more sensorial layer to each artwork. For example, ŠTO TE NEMA is not noiseless or still as one could think. The atmosphere is not as heavy as it may seem;

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<sup>204</sup> Aida Salkić Haughton, WhatsApp message to author, 17 July, 2024.

<sup>205</sup> ‘And something sweet to welcome a guest and shiny peppers,’ Moffat cites the play [SM].

<sup>206</sup> “So everywhere I went to in Bosnia, it was ‘come in, sit down, have a drink, eat this, have more...’ [SM]

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volunteers and participants constantly converse while preparing coffee and placing the cups (Parini 2019). When *fildžani* are ready, filled with coffee and put down, the culmination arrives with five minutes of silence and meditation. Finally, the cleaning of the cups begins, and the sound of porcelain cups becomes dominant as they contact each other. This process takes several hours<sup>207</sup> and has a specific meaning, according to Šehović:

So, it's quite special also, because it's the only time that the volunteers have a time to decompress and talk to each other and exchange stories and what this has meant for them. And it's a different kind of... and there something cathartic manually to just, you know, no longer feel pressure and just to keep doing this gesture, right, but like, release and to have space for you to feel what you're feeling and share stories and just be with each other. So that was...that was super important. [AŠ]

It is one of ŠTO TE NEMA's key moments as it brings people together worldwide. Despite the language barriers and the cups' noise, people connect through shared experiences (Parini 2019). The sound of crushing beans (related to crushing bones) dominated the 8372 performance. Zajc let me listen to the recording, and the sound was indeed thunderous and powerful, sometimes resembling a series of cartridges. Even though 8372 was a memorial performance in which Zajc chose not to be the initiator of the conversations, the audience could stay silent or lead the conversation if they wanted, reflects Zajc:

I thought both of those parts are interesting because one is of course more relaxed, commemorative moment where we all silent. [...] but when they started talking, or singing or whatever, it became that dining table that that lady missed in her... To drink coffee with my husband means to be seated at the dining table. And I thought both options were good. So, I didn't think it anybody if they wanted to speak, if they wanted to ask me something, I did answer we can have a conversation. We can be quiet. [BZ1]

It is worth noting that the Bosnian folk songs, known as *sevdalinke*, and poetry inspired ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL. The play's title, *My Thousand Year Old Land*, and its scene that welcomes the guests in Bosnia by its fascinating nature were inspired by the first (1992-1998) national anthem of Bosnia and Herzegovina: *Jedna si, jedina/You Are the One and Only*

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<sup>207</sup> "And then we would spend hours cleaning and washing the cups. And that's also very invisible to majority of people part of the project that is actually quite close to me, because it's the only time...first, like the washing would often last hours. So, I said in Srebrenica: 'we have to do it the next day, we could leave it there.' And it was another eight or nine hours just to wash all the cups." [AŠ]

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lyrics written by Dino Merlin and music derived from *sevdalinka S one strane Plive [o Jajca]/On the other side of the Pliva river [or Jajce]* (Pennanen 2014). As mentioned, *Što te nema* appears primarily as a famous *sevdalinka* to note the absence of a loved person written by Aleksa Šantić. The choice to embrace titles of two well-known *sevdalinkas* adds new, unexpected layers and associations to the artistic works. Additionally, MTYOL's soundtrack applies a few other folk songs and lullabies.<sup>208</sup> Moffat recorded wistful songs of Kada Hotić, one of the Srebrenica mothers, who lost her son, husband and two brothers in the genocide, and incorporated them into MTYOL [SM]. Such an artistic choice directly links the victims and the audience. Finally, song usage in art initiatives adds a unique poetic colour that refers to Bosnian traditions and identity.

In fact, all three initiatives are willing to introduce and explain Bosnian customs to the audience. By presenting and adapting existing traditions, MTYOL and ŠTO TE NEMA not only seek more effective engagement with the audience but also attempt to rebuild the associative image of BiH, which has been predominantly associated with the genocide. In turn, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* depicts how Turkish-type coffee is drunk in Slovenia rather than faking the Bosnian coffee rituals [BZ2]. Regarding coffee customs, it is interesting to mention that both MTYOL and *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* incorporated the reading of the coffee cups that is typical for Bosnian coffee-drinking culture. On the one hand, Zajc's grandmother is a psychic, so he also relates to her. On the other hand, Zajc perceives Slovenia as a constituent part of the region since both countries were previously part of Yugoslavia, and today, Slovenia has a considerable Bosnian immigrant population.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> See Annexe 15 for the titles and which scenes they appear in.

<sup>209</sup> "But we do, like at home [in Slovenia], we all drink the Turkish coffee... [...] Like we don't bake it in the ovens like the Bosnians do. But some of them yeah, because there's also lots of Bosnians here. For example, I grew up... this lady was babysitting me, she was baking the coffee, you know, a lot of that still happening. We all drink a tonne of coffee, Slovenians, we just drink coffee outside and smoke. That's basically all we do, when we're not working." [BZ1]



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The divinatory reading after drinking coffee could relate to future-oriented memory, which Rigney (2018) argues is a key memory feature practised in activism.<sup>210</sup> Reading from coffee grounds, elements of the present and projections of a possible future collide, just as in memory activism, the past inspires projections of the future. Neither coffee fortune telling nor memory in activism is static, but always oriented towards change and prospects.

The sense of **touch** appears nonetheless necessary. In ŠTO TE NEMA, volunteers and participants continuously find themselves in physical contact with the cups, placing them, filling them in and cleaning them. Similarly, in 8372, direct contact is made with the mortar and pestle. In MTYOL, actresses engage in physical contact with personal items associated with victims to whom these items belonged. Additionally, one might consider the concept of imaginary touch with those who have passed away and those who are present as a form of bridging the gap between the absent and the present. Lastly, **vestibular (balance)** and **kinesthetic (movement)** senses also matter. In ŠTO TE NEMA, individuals frequently move to complete tasks, whether making coffee, going around with the *džezve* and *fildžani*, filling in the cups, or interacting with each other. Following this, five minutes of silence requires body awareness. In 8372, participants come and go to contribute to the coffee grinding challenge, which requires strength, patience and concentration. In MTYOL, movement and balance are part of scenography, which is well thought out. Actresses masterly use and reuse the same things to engage the audience and bring it closer to the Bosnian reality.

The consistency of the modes enables storytelling, which each arts initiative manages differently. ŠTO TE NEMA attracts the audience with its visual representation and the coffee smell. However, volunteers invite passers-by to pour the coffee to honour the victims, and simultaneously, they get to know what the nomadic monument is all about. 8372 experience

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<sup>210</sup> I would like to thank the reviewer Daniele Salerno for suggesting the idea of developing this argument.

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differs according to the people who attended the performance at any given time—whether they experienced silence or chatted with Zajc and other participants. Without explanation, 8372 and *ŠTO TE NEMA* audiences could hardly connect to the Srebrenica genocide, mainly since none of those initiatives portrayed violence or atrocities. From the first sight, they could have been anything. However, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* seemed to have much to do with storytelling. Finally, MTYOL is entirely based on the stories of survivors and their communication with the audience, so it is very educational and self-explanatory. MTYOL seems to be targeting Western audiences, intending to educate them about Bosnian culture as well as the crimes that occurred in the 1990s. In contrast to the other two initiatives, the play portrayed some indirect violence, such as bombing sounds and other body gestures, to depict the bombing of Sarajevo and children's experience of war, which was not without casualties. It also introduced the audience to the Sarajevo roses, which mark certain places in the city where people were shot and murdered during the siege.

To conclude, all the selected works communicate with the public through tradition and images of everyday life, in particular, the drinking of coffee. Coffee helps to create a space for interaction and to connect with the audience on a human level. The artworks also attempt to reconstruct the image of BiH, which the Western gaze and Orientalism have heavily influenced. Before the genocide, *ŠTO TE NEMA*, 8372 and MTYOL present BiH as having rich traditions, strong local communities, close family ties and beautiful landscapes (in the case of MTYOL). Such an approach allows them to create a hypothetical image of looming atrocities and teaches the audience to appreciate the 'normality' they experience in peaceful times. The multimodal discourse analysis showed that artworks approach the audience slightly differently than traditional forms of remembrance, as they personalise the content, making it more relatable. Although both conventional and non-conventional forms focus on

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the same theme—human loss—the non-traditional artistic forms of remembrance make it more intimate and closer to the viewers and participants.

### **6.2.3 Examining Art Initiatives Through the Lens of Memory Studies**

#### **6.2.3.1 Artistic Iconisation of the Srebrenica Genocide**

In *Time Maps*, Zerubavel (2003b) tries to understand how historical narratives are structured and provides specific models that reveal the logic of how such models are structured. In other words, he focuses not on what happened but on how it is remembered and mentally constructed. Clearly, art contributes to the construction of narratives, selectively highlighting details of memory that would otherwise be forgotten or creating new meanings—in this case, the coffee-drinking custom and its attributes. In this way, art shapes and structures memory, creating an emotional understanding of the event that fits into broader cultural and historical narratives, as described by Zerubavel. This subsection seeks to explore how selected artworks iconise the Srebrenica genocide: what meanings they take from the conventional Srebrenica narrative and, most importantly, what transformations they present in order to contribute to collective memory.

All selected art initiatives support and promote the most significant elements of the established Srebrenica commemorative landscape. First, they all embrace the ICTY and ICJ convictions to define the events in Srebrenica as genocide. Although the 8372 description defines Srebrenica as a massacre, it is clear from the interviews with Zajc [BZ1, BZ2, BZ3] that Zajc considers these events to be genocide and does not minimise its importance or scale:

“Pokol” comes from the word “klati”, which means “to slaughter”—a symbolically very strong word, but that does not mean that I reject the term “genocide”—there was a genocide in Srebrenica, that is a fact. My idea is not to question this fact politically. I think the word “massacre” reinforces the human factor, the slaughter that took place at that time, and gives the performance an immediate association with what it is about—the emotional part of the tragedy. [BZ3]

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The official communication of ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL on the Srebrenica genocide is clear; they use precisely this term. Nevertheless, MTYOL also aims to bring awareness about the other war crimes and massacres committed by Bosnian Serb authorities and the VRS.<sup>211</sup> From my observations, in public communication, none of the creators referred to the broader term of *Bosnian* genocide<sup>212</sup>—but some elaborated on their personal views during interviews conducted for this research.<sup>213</sup> Secondly, ŠTO TE NEMA and 8372 directly embrace the number of victims engraved on the plaque in the Memorial cemetery and fostered by the official memory bearer, i.e., Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial Centre (see 4.2 section). Thirdly, all initiatives pay attention to the women and mothers of Srebrenica, emblematic figures in their own right, serving as primary witnesses, survivors, and keepers of the memory of the genocide. As mentioned above, ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL have collaborated closely with survivors' associations, the *Women of Srebrenica* and the *Movement of Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves*. Fourthly, the symbol of the Srebrenica flower is presented on the MTYOL stage and in some of the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* performances. Zajc entertained his guests with cookies, which, according to him, refer to the Srebrenica flower but have fewer petals. Finally, before the MTYOL begins, the name-reading recording is played, recalling the public reading of the victims' names organised by the Memorial Centre.

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<sup>211</sup> Accusations of nationalist tendencies appear in the script, but I did not notice any mention of crimes committed by other sides (i.e., Bosnian Croats or Bosniaks).

<sup>212</sup> The complex nature of employing the notion of the Bosnian genocide is discussed in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3). It is crucial to note that my analysis is not intended as a critique of the creators' intentions or experiences, but rather as an examination of how narratives are constructed and communicated. The sensitivity of these topics is deeply respected, and the goal is to understand the nuances of the terminology and its implications.

<sup>213</sup> The term "Bosnian genocide" was referenced in the interview with Sturdy Colls [CSC]. Haughton also explained her position: "[...] when we say Srebrenica Memorial we don't mean just Srebrenica, I mean you know it means so much more. It means literally every single person. But sometimes other people misunderstand. [...] Thinking that Srebrenica is only like that the event that happened in Srebrenica, it's just that the legally it has been proclaimed for genocide. But the thing is like you know, how many people really qualifies for genocide, you know, like, if you have the 10 stages of genocide taking place for us, crimes in Prijedor and Kozarac are just as bad as [...] genocide in Srebrenica." [AH2]

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As observed, commemorative art initiatives take over quite a lot of content, primarily aligning with the established official narrative of the Srebrenica genocide.

The process can also be reversed because art initiatives, especially ŠTO TE NEMA, highly contribute to the iconisation of the Srebrenica genocide. During the global pandemic, ŠTO TE NEMA has undoubtedly become the unofficial face of the Srebrenica genocide on social media, with people sharing its visuals and hashtags. Sometimes, the (re-)tweets did not contain direct references to the art project; however, through the hashtag #ŠtoTeNema, the end users of Twitter (now X) mostly remembered the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. In these cases, users expanded the semantic landscape of the Srebrenica genocide by adding other iconic symbols (such as the Srebrenica flower, the blue butterfly, and the Dutch peacekeeper), giving them a new meaning and referring to grief, the search for justice and responsibility. ŠTO TE NEMA held a particular message and narrative, enriched over time by users who wanted to contribute to the virtual mourning (Jaugaitė 2024a).



**Figure 6.1:** The cover of the *Coffee Morning pack* released by *Remembering Srebrenica* organisation in 2023



**Figure 6.2:** YMCA North Staffordshire Facebook post (8 July, 2024) visual. The text says: “YMCA North Staffordshire would like to invite you to a coffee morning on 11th of July at 10:30am as part of Srebrenica Memorial Day”

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Another excellent example of such a process is the *Coffee Morning pack* guidelines prepared by *Remembering Srebrenica* organisation in the UK. The initial pack came out in 2023 (Fig. 6.1), and a similar version was released in 2024. *Remembering Srebrenica* organises and supports annual commemorations to remember the victims and strengthen local communities across the UK. The *Coffee Morning pack* invites people to join the organisation or practice a personal coffee ritual to remember the victims: “In this Coffee Morning pack, you will find a brief history, survivor testimony and also information on the importance of coffee in the Bosnian culture. We hope the pack inspires you to organise your own coffee morning to remember and honour the victims and survivors of the genocide” (*Remembering Srebrenica* 2024). The pack also contains information about ŠTO TE NEMA, directly referring to the artistic project. Curiously, no reference was made to a theatrical production of MTYOL staged in the UK. *Remembering Srebrenica* must be aware of MTYOL, as Haughton has worked and collaborated with them. She also has worked for the *YMCA North Staffordshire* for many years. Additionally, I observed that *YMCA North Staffordshire* organised their *Coffee Morning* using the guidelines by *Remembering Srebrenica* on 11 July 2024. One can see that the created visual (Fig. 6.2) does not use the traditional attributes of Bosnian coffee but instead depicts the *cappuccino/latte* type of coffee image favoured by the British to be more relatable.

The *Coffee Morning* pack also includes some quotes from Mothers of Srebrenica about what coffee means to them. For example, I was particularly struck by the quote from Kada Hotić (Fig. 6.4). After a quick online search, I found another quote from Hotić posted by *Remembering Srebrenica* on X in 2020 (Fig. 6.3). For Hotić, the coffee ritual symbolises marriage, a deep connection and togetherness that she can no longer share with her husband and son, who were massacred. It seems fair to say that Hotić’s story and her relationship with her husband have influenced all the artistic works I explore. She seems to be the same woman

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who misses her husband the most over coffee, who inspired ŠTO TE NEMA and 8372.

Haughton also notes that Hotić was one of the mothers they worked with on MTYOL.

However, given the importance of coffee in Bosnian culture, it could also be any other wife.

Each text should not be abstracted, as they have a significant degree of intertextuality. The

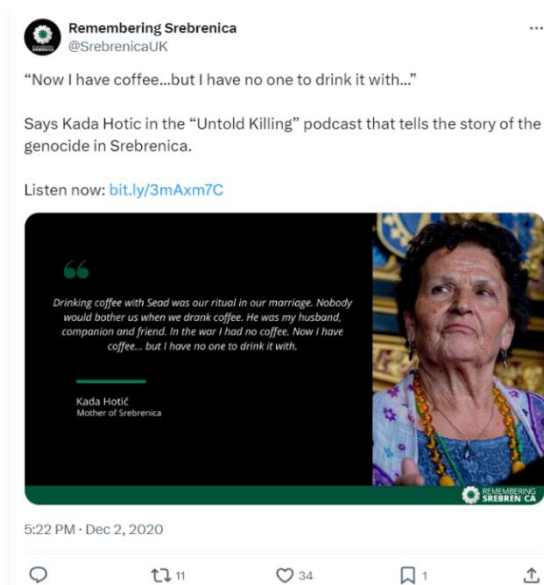
texts are intertwined, making it difficult to determine which came first, like the chicken and

the egg. It is a normal process where meanings travel and intermingle within the semantic

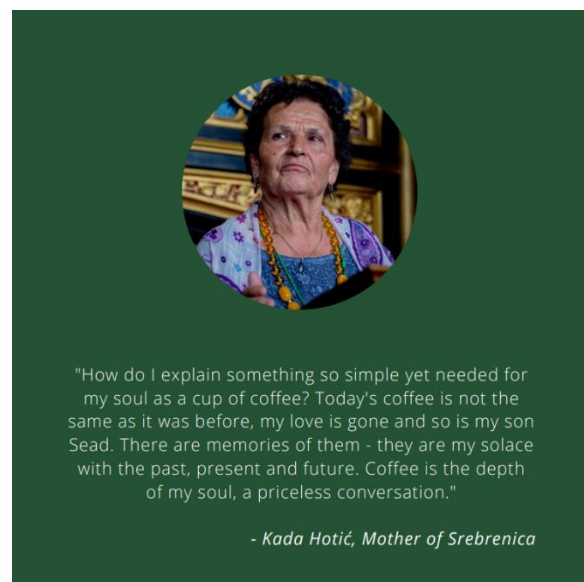
map. It would probably be unwise to derive and attribute everything that links Srebrenica and

coffee to ŠTO TE NEMA alone. On the other hand, this seems to have been the first initiative

of its kind to give artistic and visual form to the idea of Hotić (or any other mother).



**Figure 6.3: *Remembering Srebrenica* post on X that includes the quote by Kada Hotić**



**Figure 6.4: Quote by Kada Hotić taken from the *Coffee Morning* pack released by *Remembering Srebrenica* in 2024**

To conclude, one might also refer to the performance *You're not here for coffee/Nema te na kahvi*, which was already discussed in Chapter 4 (see section 4.3.1). This performance (Fig. 6.5) seems to imitate the ŠTO TE NEMA monument. In this case, it proves that ŠTO TE NEMA itself has become so iconic that it has inspired other initiatives that draw from its conceptual basis. This kind of repetition of ŠTO TE NEMA semantics will only increase,



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given that ŠTO TE NEMA as a monument is already finished and has become history itself.

Also, it has recently become an organisation offering educational, inspiring, and empowering workshops. So, it continues to employ coffee to talk about the genocide and simultaneously pursue community building. The following sub-subsection further examines the role of artists as memory agents.



**Figure 6.5: Performance *You're not here for coffee/Nema te na kahvi* in Goražde on 12 July 2020. Picture taken by V. Bešić © Anadolu Agency (2020)**

### 6.2.3.2 Agency through the Arts: Memory Activists and Manifestations of Multidirectional Memory in Selected Initiatives

Since the selected artistic initiatives focus not only on creating art, but also on memory, testimony and genocide awareness, I classify the artists as memory agents. In their efforts to remind and educate their audiences about the Srebrenica genocide, the artists seek to impact their audiences positively. By telling the stories of the victims and survivors of the genocide, they also aim to contribute to a peaceful future and prevent new genocides and war crimes against civilians. To better understand the role and positionality of these artists, Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021) propose a typology for comparative research on memory activists, which



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was previously mentioned in Chapter 3. Much has been said about the role of artists in the semantic field of Srebrenica and the formation of narratives, but a typology of them can help to enrich this sub-subsection and draw conclusions from what has been said.

Chapter 3 (see section 3.1) discussed the difference between memory activism and alternative commemorative practices and concluded that while ŠTO TE NEMA fits within the definition of memory activism, two other initiatives fluctuate between definitions of memory activism and alternative commemorative practices,<sup>214</sup> which are pretty close. Thus, regardless of the exact term under which their art initiatives appear, I think all selected creators can be described as memory activists, following the definition by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, 2): Memory activist is “an agent (individual or group) who strategically commemorates the past in order to publicly address the dominant perception of it. Memory activists use memory as *the* crucial way of transforming society from below. Memory activists identify as non-state actors, but their efforts can also be directed at defending the status quo or official historical narratives *from* change instigated by others.” The authors further elaborate:

A memory activist can be an individual actor or a group of people, organized formally in associations, or at various levels of informality. Thus, we include organized protest actions, as well as one-off, spontaneous and ephemeral efforts to engage public memory and regard those actors as memory activists in this situation. “Memory activist” is therefore a broader and, at the same time, narrower category than a “memory movement”; it is broader because it includes informal protest whereas social movement scholars usually regard “a movement” as a sustained, organized, and repeated action that requires enduring commitment from its members [...]. (Gutman and Wüstenberg 2021, 2)

Following the established definition, the artists selected for this research correspond to the criteria by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021). It is worth noting that Šehović publicly defines her role as an artist and activist (or simply activist). Although Haughton has never considered

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<sup>214</sup> Also, there have been changes. Chapter 3 stated that MTYOL does not operate in the region; however, the intention to perform in BiH next year (2025) has now been announced.

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herself an activist, she sees the role of representing victims as the right one to play.<sup>215</sup> Zajc did not make any statements about activism, but according to Gutman and Wüstenberg's (2021) definition of a memory activist, he does not need to. It is enough that his 8372 commemorated the past to remind the public of the genocide, and in this way, he engaged in public memory.

Further, I employ Gutman and Wüstenberg's (2021) typology to determine which type of memory activist the selected artists fall into (see Table 6.4 below for summarised results). To define a particular type, Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021) distinguish a few dimensions: *role* (victims, resisters and heroes, entangled agents and pragmatists), *modes of interaction* (warriors or pluralists) and *notions of temporality* (whether the past has ended/post-conflict situation or whether the past is ongoing/during conflict). None of the selected artists are victims of the genocide, nor are they resisters or heroes: usually, survivors' associations that actively resist fall into this category. I identify Šehović, Zajc and Haughton as *entangled agents* because all of them come from the region and feel the responsibility to talk about the Srebrenica genocide, although they do not have a direct connection. Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, 8) describe *entangled agents* as individuals who, despite being temporally or geographically distant from historical events, feel a sense of responsibility or connection to those events, even if they are not directly involved or connected to them.<sup>216</sup> Šehović is a former refugee who had to flee the country during the ongoing conflict and committed crimes; Haughton stayed during the siege and was directly targeted by VRS and the Serbian Army of Krajina (SVK), while Zajc considers his family to come from the perpetrators' side.

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<sup>215</sup> "Ummm... I never thought of it... at putting a label on it. But I feel that I'm alive. Therefore, I need to talk. [...] And just I'm grateful that I can actually talk and represent all those innocent victims that were, who that were killed. And I think that's just my life. Really. You know, I don't, you know, take as activism. I just think it's the right thing to do. And that's the least I can do because I am alive." [AH2]

<sup>216</sup> "We draw here centrally on Michael Rothberg's (2019) work on implicated subjects, but extend the category to include not only those who feel responsible for past injustices, but also those who see themselves connected to their "heritage" and feel the need to defend it against change." (Gutman and Wüstenberg 2021, p. 8)

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All of them feel the need to advocate for the Srebrenica genocide in the context of the emerging denial. Moffat is more difficult to assign to a single role. On the one hand, she seems to be emotionally entangled with the Srebrenica genocide and sensitive to the war experience of the Bosnian people.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, her creative works not only support the side of the voiceless, but she has also directly helped displaced people and is actively involved in political and social activities. On the other hand, Moffat appears to be more of a *pragmatist*. Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, 8) see *pragmatists* as activists who, despite lacking a direct emotional connection to the past, base their legitimacy on professional commitments to democratic norms or human rights. Moffat is a passionate defender of human rights, a fighter against hatred and injustice,<sup>218</sup> and a voice for the oppressed and survivors of mass violence;<sup>219</sup> therefore, she perfectly fits in this category.

“[W]arriors” regard their own interpretation of history as the only truth, while “pluralists” fundamentally believe that there is room for multiple approaches to the past, making them tolerant of others’ positions,” note Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021, 8). I see the agency of Šehović, Zajc, Haughton, and Moffat as pluralists because they do not impose one truth.<sup>220</sup> They inform about the genocide and fight against its denial, but in a personalised way and through storytelling. Every *fildžan*, every coffee bean, and every victim mentioned on the

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<sup>217</sup> “I sat in my living room, and I watched what was happening on the television. And I remember clinging on to my kids at that time, knowing that if I was just the other side of the TV screen that I could be experiencing those things.” [SM] / “[...] as somebody who potentially could be a bystander, I have a responsibility and a duty to make sure that people like me, who don't experience that thing, get it.’ And we need to understand it, because we need to be the ones who are preventing and stopping it when we say it.” [SM] / “If it can happen in Bosnia, it can happen anywhere... And if it can happen to somebody like Aida, it can happen to somebody like me.” [SM]

<sup>218</sup> “[...] [B]efore I became a mother, I was convinced that if there was any wrong in the world, I would just deal with it, I would be out the fighting on the corners, hiding people who needed to be hidden. Whatever the consequence, as a free agent, I would always stand up against evil and the rest of it.” [SM]

<sup>219</sup> “And so, when I met, Aida at the [Holocaust] play, she said, a little very quickly, something about her. And I knew instantly, I have to make the space for Aida’s experience and the story of her people.” [SM]

<sup>220</sup> Such conclusions are drawn from my own observations. When it comes to ŠTO TE NEMA, it was also stated in Dženeta Karabegović’s (2014) article. It is worth noting that Karabegović is one of the founding board members of ŠTO TE NEMA, who has been involved in its activities for many years.

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stage has his or her own story to tell. Therefore, this approach opens space for multiple perspectives but not for debates about whether the genocide happened.

	Role	Mode of interaction	Notion of temporality
Aida Šehović	entangled agents	pluralists	The past has ended + <i>it was transformed and worked through</i>
Benjamin Zajc			
Aida Salkić Haughton			
Sue Moffat	pragmatist		

**Table 6.4: Applying Gutman’s and Wüstenberg’s (2021) typology for comparative research on memory activists**

When it comes to the notion of temporality by Gutman and Wüstenberg (2021), for all the selected artists, the genocide occurred in the past: the artists contribute to the processes of remembering and “coming to terms” with the past, using the “never again” approach. Also, they advocate for a better, more inclusive and hopeful future with informed citizens.<sup>221</sup> First, they avoid constructing a typical victimhood narrative focusing on the past; instead, they look towards the present and the future capable of resisting hate crimes. Second, they promote values essential to combating hatred, such as connectedness, integrity, diversity, understanding, inclusion and humanity. Thirdly, they do not look for guilty parties but open space to remember the Srebrenica genocide, its victims and survivors locally and transnationally. However, stepping outside Gutman and Wüstenberg’s typology, it could be argued that in the selected art initiatives, the past is not only ended but also actively transformed and worked through.<sup>222</sup> Rather than simply coming to terms with the past, the artists process and reinterpret it, dynamically integrating it into the present. Therefore, they do not statically treat the Srebrenica genocide but engage with it in a way that has the potential to reshape existing narratives or suggest their own. As argued in Chapter 1, the

<sup>221</sup> The text fragments about ŠTO TE NEMA in this paragraph may overlap with the published text (Jaugaitė 2024a).

<sup>222</sup> I thank my supervisor Cristina Demaria for this observation.

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artistic narratives go beyond all rigid narratives, offering an agonistic perspective (saturated with cosmopolitan values) (Bull, Hansen, and Colom-González 2021; Kansteiner and Berger 2021), in a way that it focuses on understanding such tragedies as genocide and fostering such understanding rather than imposing the one and only *correct* narrative.

Although selected art initiatives concentrate on the Srebrenica genocide, the artists are conscious of the historical as well as contemporary context and address it indirectly. For example, Zajc links 8372 to the discovered post-Second World War mass graves in Slovenia (e.g., Kočevski Rog and Barbara Rov). He did not address this issue directly in 8372, but he said that these issues are important to him because they are not recognised, and students do not learn about them [BZ1].<sup>223</sup> During the interview, Zajc also referred to the war crimes in Ukraine during the full-scale invasion of Russian forces [BZ1]. While 8372 was very limited, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* gave more freedom to explore other themes of mass extermination. Zajc kept reminding the audience of our privilege of not having to go through the war that is happening so close to home. Haughton reflects on current ongoing violence and crimes in the post-show discussions and children's workshops:

We don't connect the play [MTYOL] itself, but the talks afterwards always reflect what's going on currently. Or the workshop. So, we always ready if children ask us. You know, particular questions we have to be ready in our own right and then representing the theatre. [...] The thing is... We are not experts in that. Obviously, you know what we as a human see that's happening. We know it's wrong [...] it's just killing and it's [...] a loss of life. And that's what we're trying to prevent. That is exactly why we would do what we're doing, even when it's kind of 'Oh, is it the right time to do it?' You know, because again, if you were to wait for right time [it would] never happen. So definitely everything that's happened in the world, we end up talking about it in the after [...] play show. [AH2]

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<sup>223</sup> “[...] ‘[C]ause it’s not just about Srebrenica, it’s about all the mass graves in Slovenia that [...] Danilo Türk, when he was the president, and they discovered another mass grave in Slovenia. This reporter asked him, like, ‘will you visit it?’ And he said, ‘those are second class topics, I will not discuss.’ So, we said that we don’t discuss about it, that never happened. [...] And if you don’t [...] educate yourself, you don’t know about it, because they don’t tell it to you at school, what they did to [in] Kočevski Rog, Slovenia, or Barbara rov... is full of it [mass graves] you know, we don’t talk about it. Never.” [BZ1]

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Such an approach is vital as Moffat and Haughton focus on hate prevention and innovative education. Before MTYOL, Moffat also directed the docudrama *Yizkor*, based on the testimony of Holocaust survivors. Interestingly, MTYOL was screened twice on 23 January 2023 as part of the programme dedicated to International Holocaust Remembrance Day.<sup>224</sup>

As mentioned several times, Šehović holds workshops with different communities and talks about the Srebrenica genocide in order to prevent similar atrocities. Hence, she aims to raise awareness of the genocide(s) and aggression against civilian populations. In 2023, Šehović began a new body of work titled *Street Signs. The Sarajevo – Kyiv* version was made in response to the first anniversary of Russian aggression and a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Currently, the artist is very concerned about the devastating situation for civilians in Palestine and continues to inform her (digital) audience about it.

All selected artworks communicate that atrocities can happen anywhere and aim to prevent hate crimes, raising the audience's awareness. All mentioned artists acknowledge the current conflicts, particularly the extensive violence in Ukraine and/or Palestine. Thus, when discussing Srebrenica, they also have a broader context (other genocides, crimes, atrocities and even personal losses) in mind. That suggests that the concept of *multidirectional memory* (Rothberg 2009), although not immediately apparent in the artworks, is reflected in the artists' activities and specific actions.

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<sup>224</sup> 27 January marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. It may be added that on 27 January 2025, Moffat has organised the Holocaust Memorial to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the forthcoming 30th anniversary of the genocide in BiH. This time Moffat directed *Voices From*, which became “a creative exploration of conflict and peace through the eyes of children caught in history's darkest moments. From the Holocaust to the Srebrenica Genocide and current conflicts, *Voices From* amplifies the voices of young lives often unheard, guiding audiences through moving stories of reflection and responsibility” (New Vic Theatre 2025).

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Despite some differences, all the initiatives approach the Srebrenica genocide similarly. They promote empathy, avoid victimisation discourse, employ an inclusive approach, and thus contribute to peacebuilding. Moreover, the selected art initiatives could foster (historical) empathy<sup>225</sup> towards *former enemies* or the coexistence of different people. Most importantly, all three artworks condemn hate and raise awareness of the genocide, which continues to be denied or/and ignored locally, regionally and even transnationally.

Moffat, Haughton, Šehović and Zajc demonstrate that artists have assumed a key role in acknowledging war crimes, coming to terms with the past, and working towards postwar peacebuilding. MTYOL becomes an example of an art initiative successfully invoked in education under the MTYOC project. Šehović also works with youth and discusses hate crimes during her workshops. That proves that some artists decide to take an active role in making a change, crossing the line of art and stepping into activism and social change spheres.

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<sup>225</sup> I refer to Jeftić's (2020) research, which argued that historical empathy could be developed through certain museums (e.g., *War Childhood museum* in Sarajevo) and history teaching.

## **7 Audience Perception of Art Initiatives: Positive and Negative Critique, Impact, Public Engagement and Participation**

The main objective of this chapter is to explore how audiences understood and interpreted the selected art initiatives. The following three sections, dedicated to each initiative, examine audience reception and understanding in more detail. They focus on positive and negative criticism, assessment of the atmosphere created, the feelings experienced, the perceived impact, the purpose of each work of art and the general reception (broader public and/or local community), as commented on by the respondents. Additionally, the sections present the parallels respondents drew with the broader context and history and their socio-political critique. At the end of the chapter, the three tables summarise the most pronounced meanings encoded by artists and decoded/interpreted by the audience for each initiative. While these tables present only a summary of the data, Annexes [16](#), [17](#), [18](#) and [19](#) provide an opportunity to look at the complete picture of the data collected and categorised. The final conclusions and overall interpretation of the data are presented in the conclusions.

### **7.1 ŠTO TE NEMA Reception**

The interviewees have highly praised ŠTO TE NEMA. Many highlighted its profound artistic way of individualizing the memory of each victim through the special care given to each *foldžan*. Those involved in the construction of ŠTO TE NEMA monument comprehend Šehović's vision and aimed to execute it as best as possible:

[...] [A] lot of people that came to visit, they were asking the same thing. 'Why wouldn't you just put your boxes with coffee cups next to you and then you would put them around' [...]. And Aida told in the same way that those men and children were sent to their deaths one by one, it would be like a symbol. Each cup represented each individual person, and we each had to carry the one cup, one by one to the place. [...] [Y]ou treat each individual cup with so much care as though you're carrying a child in your hands. [Šejla]



## Chapter 7: Audience Perception of Art Initiatives: Positive and Negative Critique, Impact, Public Engagement and Participation

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[...] I was just thinking that [...] she really wanted to emphasise the individuality [...] because of the differences of these cups which reflect that each person has a really different character and different talents and different power to [...] have in this world. And it was taken during the war. [Jasmina]

[...] when we did the monument we cooked the coffee at the proper rate, it was not like we cooked the coffee for [...] more than 10,000 cups. [...] We knew that we had to do it properly, so we did it like you do it like it's your dearest guest is coming. [Hana]

The respondents agree that ŠTO TE NEMA used influential artistic means to commemorate and invoke the presence of the victims [Adna] and create a relatable experience for foreign audience members who could hardly relate to genocide loss but could think about the dear persons they lost personally: “[W]e all understand death. Or most of us do. And so, if you say, [...] ‘when you pour that cup, think about your grandparents’ or anyone else who might have lost, people connect to it in a more profound way,” notes Esma. Volunteers remark that the monument became a gentle but powerful way to talk about the genocide. “We usually use some harsh [...] ways to [...] tell the story [of] what happened in Srebrenica because we think it’s the only way [...] that [...] people will hear us [...]. And Aida did that in really gentle way and I [...] think it’s amazing,” reflects Velma. Šejla adds that probably “if Aida had done anything differently, I think that it wouldn’t have reached so many people [...].” Also, ŠTO TE NEMA was powerful in visualising the scale of loss<sup>226</sup> and creating an unforgettable bonding experience.<sup>227</sup> A few remark that ŠTO TE NEMA engaged the public through sensory experience, primarily through smell and visual: “It’s [...] hard to like wrap your mind around just because there’s so many cups,” recalls Emina. Additionally, Emina and Mira note Šehović’s decision to reject any flyers, brochures, signs or similar manifestations to avoid being a part of political agendas but instead create an organic involvement: “People would

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<sup>226</sup> “[...] in the end, the amount cups surpassed the amount of victims, so [...] we placed about [...] 9500 cups [...] And when you look at you don’t really process that it’s that much. And then when you think about it, if your eye can’t grasp the amount of cups that is in front of you. Then how could it grasps like 8732 people and that is not even the final number. So, while we were placing the cups, they were bringing the bodies [...]” [Šejla]

<sup>227</sup> “It’s such a delicate piece [...] of [...] porcelain [...] but it’s also like a bonding [...]. Everyone is doing the same thing and working together and it’s just, honestly, an experience I’ll never forget.” [Emina]

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show up with flags. And she's like, 'you can't stay here.' [...] 'please put them down.' [...]

this [is] political appropriation, because people who have political agendas, probably they would like to come and piggyback on her project and kind of appropriate it a little bit for their own purposes," remembers Mira. The fact that the artist does not use national, religious or other symbols of belonging is one of the greatest strengths of ŠTO TE NEMA.

Undoubtedly, ŠTO TE NEMA became the highlight of the Srebrenica Youth School and made those attending feel like they were participating in something big and remarkable.

Šejla, Jasmina and Velma talk about the transformative power of art and highlight the artist's ability to articulate the memory of Srebrenica compellingly:

[...] I can safely say that going to that summer school was the best thing that happened in my life because it was so transformative... and so inspiring so many ways. [...] I was really satisfied [...] you always think about when will this big moment come? What will be this big thing to me that I will remember for the rest of my life? And for me, that was [...] that [...] summer school and those few days that I spent in Srebrenica. [Šejla]

We were all kind of... Surprised, even then it was the most tiring part of the summer school, [...] it was kind of the most interesting part [...] because we weren't just listening [...], we were giving the life to that monument [...]. And that kind of reflects the success of the project. I think that in order to project to be successful, you of course need to kind of evolve a lot of people and give them a space to be natural and give them the time to process. [...] It was really a special moment. Like when you feel that kind of tiredness, but you know that you did something really valuable and cherishable and [...] the impact will last over the years and maybe it will come bigger over the, during the years that will come. [Jasmina]

[...] [Y]ou're part of something big [...] [Velma]

Šejla reflects on her personal transformation due to participation in ŠTO TE NEMA, which evoked profound emotions and self-reflection. Her belief in remembering this experience highlights the art's role in memory and healing. ŠTO TE NEMA created the whole emotional and psychological experience, which allowed participants to process collective trauma and historical narratives in a way that traditional methods usually fail (Murphy 2021b). Despite tiredness and exhaustion, Jasmina values the idea of engaged participation, emphasising the active role and agency participants had in giving "life to that monument." So, ŠTO TE

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NEMA successfully fostered a sense of connection and gave volunteers co-creative ownership over the monument and even the memory of Srebrenica. Both Jasmina and Velma clearly understand the historical value of ŠTO TE NEMA. Velma's statement about "part of something big" suggests that artists and her volunteers/participants actively participate in shaping the memory of Srebrenica for future generations through their contributions. In Šejla's, Jasmina's and Velma's perspectives, art becomes a powerful tool for lifting memorialisation to a new level, not only about remembering the past but also about collectively overcoming the trauma and connecting. Art not only gives form to commemoration (as was traditionally the case) but activates commemoration through engagement, which creates a lasting impact. Jasmina's statement that "the impact will last over the years" indicates ŠTO TE NEMA's long-term effect on the whole Srebrenica memory landscape.

Respondents also shared their resumptive impressions about ŠTO TE NEMA's perception by the general public during different iterations. They note that bypassers were surprised and curious to find out what the project was about. Interviewees also mention a minor shock element, followed by a strong emotional impact.<sup>228</sup> Thus, evoked emotions influenced and empowered not only the volunteers but also the spontaneous participants.

The interviewees had no criticism except for a comment expressing a wish for more significant local impact and ŠTO TE NEMA presence in BiH [Velma]. The fact that the artist and her team have set up a sister NGO in BiH, runs many educational workshops, and works on the permanent ŠTO TE NEMA monument withstands criticism. Indeed, respondents were

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<sup>228</sup> "They were also very touched with it [...]. I think they always try to relate things, kind of try to understand it by relating us to the thing or [...] to your personal story. And I think maybe not everyone, but a lot of people had gone through losses in their lives [...], and maybe that reminded them of that, maybe not. Maybe some thought of Holocaust [...] or Rwanda [...]. Like a feedback was, it's like a great project and they were kind of deeply touched by it." [Mira] / "[...] I know that people reacted emotionally. Yes, yes, I remember that." [Jasmina]

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excited about Šehović's idea to settle the cups in Srebrenica and search for new ways to commemorate the genocide. For Mira and Adna, it looked a logical and commendable step in the project's transition:

I think that the cups are home [...] where they need to be. They're in Srebrenica. [...] But [...] it's such [...] a wonderful thing [...] that she was able to allow them to travel the world [...] but they have *returned home* and I don't think that she needs to continue to travel with them. I think there are other ways to commemorate and to tell those stories moving forward, and that's on all of us. I think artists, not just Aida but. Everyone who works on projects around Srebrenica [...]. [Adna]

Adna seems to mimic Šehović's vocabulary by saying, 'the cups returned home'. On the other hand, Šehović [AŠ] claimed this was repeatedly said to her by different individuals when placing the cups in front of the Memorial Centre. This is probably how the phrase 'returning home' came into use.

The interviewees found the ŠTO TE NEMA atmosphere joyful, cheerful, relaxed, peaceful, releasing, and supportive but at the same time sombre, sorrowful, reflective and touching. "So I guess bittersweet is the best. Cause it would be this very joyful experience of community, but we are there to remember a very horrific act of the past," concludes Esma. There is no doubt that their experience was emotional. Also, the participants of the 2020 iteration highlighted the heat and tiredness they experienced, which eventually was rewarding. Many felt honoured, privileged and proud to be part of the project as they found it important. They talked about emotional highs and lows (from feeling sadness, anxiety, stress, rage, and pressure to feeling joy, excitement, gratitude and fulfilment), emotional intensity, and a sense of responsibility to fulfil their role properly. Many mentioned resurfaced open wounds and post-generational trauma. Participants felt connected and engaged through the monument; some even described their participation as a cathartic experience. ŠTO TE NEMA provoked contemplative and empathetic feelings, including anger and frustration about the injustice towards the victims and displaced Srebrenica population, which transformed into the urgency, determination and inspiration to address these issues more

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often. For example, despite feeling sad, Šejla described being “hit with a sudden surge of [...] energy” to tell everyone about the Srebrenica genocide. Meanwhile, Velma was empowered by anger that young people from Srebrenica have fewer opportunities than young people from other towns in BiH, and this emotion motivated her to talk about her peers living in Srebrenica. These strong emotions empowered both Šejla and Velma. At the same time, the interviewees shared mature socio-political critique towards nationalist political leadership, which remembers Srebrenica only during commemorations demonstrating superficial engagement, the devastating situation in Srebrenica and hope in young people, persistent ethnic hatred and prejudice in the country.

Although respondents’ memories were at least three years old (and some more than a decade old!), most seemed to be quite vivid, meaning that ŠTO TE NEMA was compelling and memorable. All the interviewees seem to have decoded Šehović’s message more or less as she has intended. Their comments only complement each other, reflecting her initial encoding. According to them, the project aimed to honour Srebrenica victims, raise genocide awareness, inform local and foreign audiences, perform prevention and educate, keep collective memory alive by depicting the absence of the victims and humanising them, provide victims’ perspective, remind the human cost of violent conflict, promote peace and build community. Also, respondents claimed that it addressed genocide denial and represented the un/under-represented Bosnian community abroad. Sometimes, not only un/under-represented but also non-representable,<sup>229</sup> having lived through an experience as traumatic as genocide, which is difficult or impossible to fully capture or represent through language, media or other forms. The weight of loss may go beyond the capacity of words or images to fully convey what happened. Thus, some experiences of the Bosnian community may not just be ignored or overlooked (unrepresented) but may also be too profound or

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<sup>229</sup> I would like to thank my supervisor Cristina Demaria for bringing this to my attention.

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traumatic ever to be fully expressed (un-representable). Despite the challenges of representing the un-representable, the ŠTO TE NEMA project was able to create a space where victims' families and survivors felt both understood and accepted, according to the respondents, e.g., Velma:

For me, main point in Srebrenica was Mothers being there. And. Feeling accepted in a way and feeling that they can share pain with others and then others understand them. And I think [...] the main point of project is sharing awareness of what happened in a very... A different way that we usually, when we usually talk about this problem. This situation... I love that she was... so she used the main points of our culture like coffee cups and she in a very, very unique way expressed it. And I think that's the main point of the project to show people. Not pointing any fingers at anyone, but just saying it happened and we need to acknowledge that. [Velma]

Velma considers not only the fundamental points of the project but also the reflections of the 2020 iteration in Potočari. The final stage of the monument was critical not only for Šehović but also for the volunteers. Many mentioned the importance of bringing the cups and the monument of ŠTO TE NEMA to the place where the genocide occurred: merging the nomadic monument with the original site of memory and suffering, where families were separated, and the violence started:

And for me to [...] have a chance to do it [...] in a real way and in a place where all that happened was really interesting. And I would say in a way magical because you feel important and you feel like you [are] [...] contributing to it. [...] [T]here was so many people and like. It was a. I felt like I was home in a way. Because [...] we had a community that [...] for all of the people there, it was important to be part of the project. [Velma]

So, the 2020 iteration in Potočari marked an interesting overlap between the alternative and the conventional commemoration at the original site of suffering. Such an overlap only enhanced the participants' experiences and enriched the annual commemoration with new meanings (such as coffee for the deceased), which had already been practised elsewhere. As mentioned before, ŠTO TE NEMA attained a positive reception from the survivor community and their families, who strongly welcomed the decision to place the cups in front of the Memorial Centre, as confirmed by respondents who spoke to them or who themselves have ties to the victims:

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I've met the families of the victims and actually the group called *Mothers of Srebrenica*, [...] they were really grateful that this was happening [...]. [Šejla]

Well, naturally they supported the idea. Because they participated in it. I haven't like came across with anyone who didn't support the idea. Because again, over these 15 years when she worked on collecting all of those *fildžans* were actually from the families of, from the survivors of the victims [...]. So, all of those coffee cups were actually from these family members. She even, I believe she even has this one [...] *fildžan* that was saved from generations in this one family. That is [...] around 50 years [...] old *fildžan* that was given. So, it's a huge sense of trust [...] but people understand what that meant. So that's why they participated [...]. I was really sad to get to know that a lot of people didn't get to catch it, that there is going to be this type of commemorating the victims. So, members of families, a lot of them were really sorry that they didn't got to. To bring their own [*fildžan*] because they didn't know [...]. But again, we made sure that they got a *fildžan* and they fill [it with] the coffee, even if they didn't bring their own. So just from that, I know that those people supported it and that it meant a lot for them. And again, I know why because they understand. There is no one else who understands it better than them. [Hana]

I talked with one mother and she said that she's so happy that Aida finally came there with the monument, with the project, because she also donated some cups from which her son, if I'm not mistaken, has drinking before and she... She found his bones like few years before that, and she said that in a way she felt. Like his soul is there because his cup is there and she felt like he. I mean, the cup went all over world, but that came back to him in a way. And that she felt. [...] Like he's finally home and [...]. After so many years. She feels like he's sitting next to her and she can drink coffee with him, and that's meant so much to her. [Velma]

Simultaneously, respondents emphasise lasting Šehović's commitment to ŠTO TE NEMA, her engagement and gained trust. "Due to this many years, 15 years of work on this monument, she's extremely naturally connected to it, so she's feels really protective over it, which I understand. And so I don't know what's going to be in the future, what we could expect, but from again I believe it's a great way [...], " says Hana. Although the artist does not come from Srebrenica, her longevous effort was appreciated by families of victims and survivors. She has earned it through many years of hard memory work and dedication, according to Adna, who was born in Srebrenica.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> "[...] I don't think that I would have trusted anyone else to do this if it wasn't Aida, honestly, because. She has spent, you know her, like 15-16, how many years of her life, more dedicating herself to this work and doing. And I think that she's proven over time that she is more than qualified to do this and. [...] I myself have had questions about it too, because she is from Banja Luka [...], but I think it's good to have support from someone who's not from there, [...] doing the work that she does with art. So yeah, I think if anyone is going to do it, I would say she's done it well. And she's [...] been very, I think, thoughtful [...] about how she does this and how

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Although most of the public reacted positively to the monument, Jasmina and Šejla noticed ignorant comments and situations on the last 2020 iteration. “I know that we have some comments on social media mean and [...] that happens every year. So even if it wasn’t for Aida’s installation, people are always coming in and saying a lot of negative things about Srebrenica denying genocide, but in general, I think it was a good effect,” concludes Jasmina about the cases of genocide denial. Meanwhile, Šejla shares her experience of managing a tricky situation when a person took the cup from the ground and said “I’m going to drink it.” [...] And I tried to keep my composure and I tried again, explaining to him and then [...] I said, ‘Sir, if you don’t want to participate. That is OK. But I would need to ask you to move away, [...] you should not do that [...] because in that way you diminish everything that that represents,’ remembers Šejla. Additionally, Šejla provided an example of political exploitation and insensitivity, which, according to a few interviewees, is quite common:

Where a member of the delegation came, [Bakir] Izetbegović, and he was there, like for the press to take his picture [...]. They were handed [...] *džezva* and like old lady, I think that she was one of the... Mothers, she was sitting there like I was watching her and [...] she looked me in a way as to say, ‘could you please give me the *džezva*?’ And I handed it to her. And she was sitting there in silence and pouring each individual cup. [...] Probably for her family members. And then when they [delegation] came, like there was a rush of cameramen and then people doing interviews. Because they were the delegation, the politicians. And [...] the guy that was working for [...] the president at that time. [...] I guess he didn’t like the way *džezva* looked and he like just took the *džezva* from the old lady. ‘This one looks better. Let me take this.’ [...] I was trying to keep my composure because cameras were watching and [...] I tr[ie]d not to make a scene, but that was really hurtful. And the old lady. God bless her, she didn’t say a thing, she just took the other *džezva* and started pouring coffee cups again. [...] I never really got into politics. I’m not really a person who dwells into that. But when you are living in Bosnia, you cannot avoid it. And when I saw that [...], it wasn’t really about coming, it was about taking the picture because he [...] took the *džezva*. He poured one out. Then he... they took his picture. They interviewed him. He didn’t even know what we were doing. Somebody told him [...] or explained to him. And then he just went to the burial grounds. And I stood there thinking, ‘how can you not be affected by this [...]? How can this not irk you? [...] How can you be so cool to this?’ But I then focused on the lady and on the cups that were there and I tried to forget it. But it’s the kind of thing that really left... leaves a mark. [Šejla]

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she approaches it. And I think that makes a huge difference. And I can genuinely say her motivations are in the right place. Of why she’s doing it. She’s doing it for the right reasons.” [Adna]



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Once I asked the respondents how the local community received the initiative, the majority said very well. It is pretty interesting, considering the final 2020 iteration took place in the Memorial Centre, and Srebrenica's community remain one of the most deeply divided communities in BiH. Only Jasmina noted that fact, highlighting the unwillingness of local representatives to recognise the genocide.<sup>231</sup> It seems that most of the respondents understood 'the local community' as the general Bosnian population, who may relate to genocide and/or feel empathy for the victims.

Overall, most of the interviewees think the intended message was successfully delivered to the broader audience abroad and in BiH. Here are some reflections:

I don't think [...] anyone [...] [I] left place confused [...] because [...] the whole point was to attract attention and to open conversation. And once you start talking about and explain it in some sensible way, everyone who's sensible would understand what the purpose of it and what it means. So, I think they got a message. I think that they may have even gotten a deeper feeling out of it as well [...] for the purpose that she wanted to accomplish and that the message she wants sent, I think was really successful [...] to deliver the message. [I]t's a powerful message and the experience [...] is the strongest. It stays with you so. [Dino, US]

I think they did. They did, partially because it's not even about... Yes, it starts with Srebrenica. But it's not about that necessarily, you know, like it's commemorating, but it's also for the peace or any it's, you know like any it's so *universal*, these things repeat. Doesn't matter where they are, you know? Uhm, so it was also that kind of universal aspect of the war and the victims [...]. So, I think. People do get it or did get it. Especially because [...] she had volunteers who were explaining it. If you wanted to hear it, like you could talk and kind of learn about it. [Mira, US]

Yes, I think they did because it was really reflected in a basic way. It was approachable to [...] regular citizen. A lot of people could understand the importance of coffee, [...] especially people in Bosnia understand the importance of drinking coffee and the [...] intimacy and the closeness that it brings. So, I think that a lot of that, the audience really understood perfectly the message behind the project because they were they are connected with it [...] on a daily basis. [Jasmina, BiH]

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<sup>231</sup> "No, I don't think so. I know that the local community in Srebrenica is really hard to work with especially [...] with the Memorial Centre in Srebrenica that is always... Their director Emir Suljagić always kind of emphasised that it's really hard kind of to communicate with the local, [...] not the community, but with the representatives in, in local municipality, so... And I think that's won't change soon, unfortunately. I mean, they had local elections last year and unfortunately a person who kind of won is denying the genocide." [Jasmina]

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In my opinion, yes [...]. They received it well, they praised it, and they, just like me, are glad that someone talks about it and organises projects related to genocide. [Nadira, BiH]

Honestly, [...] I think we truly understood the message. [...] [I]t was a significant loss, and we must not allow something like that to happen ever again, anywhere... in that way. I mean, we should have good relations, that we should be here, we should socialise, let's say, we should have coffee together instead of remembering some people who are no longer with us but could have been. [Lara, BiH]

Mira and Jasmina highlight the universality of the message, suggesting that the project resonated not only with local audiences in BiH, but also with a wider international audience. According to Jasmina, using the coffee element as a recognisable everyday symbol in the project made it relatable and helped convey the message. Dino points to the emotional and experiential dimensions of the message, suggesting that ŠTO TE NEMA was not just about intellectual understanding but also about creating a lasting emotional impact. Nevertheless, there were doubts as to whether audiences, particularly in the United States, fully understood the project based on experience:

[U]nfortunately, I think people in the US are quite disconnected from wars. People in the US are quite disconnected from human suffering. [...] There is unfortunately this phenomenon where people see it on TV or hear about it in the news, but there is this disconnection from actually what's happening [...] elsewhere. And it's just something I've observed, I work in media too. So, I actually feel that disconnection [is] very strongly. On a daily basis, even with what's happening in Ukraine, for example, [...] people disconnected from the human suffering elements of it. [...] I'm sure people from Bosnia, or even maybe other countries connected with that project more [...] I don't wanna generalise and judge [Americans], but I do think for whatever reason, there is some barrier in the ability to connect as deeply as maybe people from other places where they've seen this play out in their own countries. [...] I always found that like my friends here [in the US] [...] and people I would meet didn't really understand the conflict as much right as maybe some other people. So that's always something that I struggle on. 'Like, how do I show it with art or in film in a way where people feel I make them feel something' instead of telling them about the conflict because they won't understand it if I use words, right? [...] I don't know. Maybe she did have people from the US if they were able to feel what the project is about. I think it resonated, but. And I think that's where art comes in, right, if you do it the right way, [...] you can make people feel something instead of trying to explain it to them because there is that barrier. [...] I do think that the project definitely resonates more in Europe, [...] where... [...] she's gotten so much support [...]. Not that she didn't here, but I think it is more amplified over there. [Adna]

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So, Adna touches on many aspects, including geographical distance, cultural disconnection, and emotional engagement with art projects focused on conflict and suffering. As a media practitioner, she asks how suffering can be depicted in a way that people can empathise with and relate to it. Her insights suggest that well-crafted art can bridge this gap, bringing the audiences closer to distant conflicts. She sees the potential in art to foster empathy and understanding, but only if it succeeds in evoking emotions and making abstract tragedies feel personal and immediate. Respondents confirmed that ŠTO TE NEMA and its design could evoke emotions that had empowering and transformative effects.

Those interviewed perceived multiple impacts of the project. Many highlighted the humanising impact and ŠTO TE NEMA's capability to see victims as individuals rather than numbers.<sup>232</sup> According to them, it brings audiences closer to the victims and has an emotional and empathetic impact. Also, interviewees highlight the impact on prevention, education, and the fight against genocide denial. As Lara remarks, ŠTO TE NEMA had an additional inspirational and hopeful impact, "[...] it is really, [...] inspiring for us in the sense that no one should ever think of such a thing again, God forbid, we genuinely do not wish to argue with *anyone* or get into conflict with *anyone* because it must not happen again." Overall, the interviewees think the project was influential in commemorating the genocide and bringing awareness: "I believe ŠTO TE NEMA was actually one of the best ways," concludes Hana.

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<sup>232</sup> "Very unique way to show in reality like how [...] many people actually are those like the... when you hear the number you have it in your mind but like when you see it in reality with the cups and writing names." [Velma] / "I think once you're connected on a personal level, it becomes easier and that's just something that I deal with in my own art as well that you know. It's very easy to get to become very numb at numbers [...]. So, I feel like it's really important to make people understand that even one person so, like, if you lost your parent, right, your dad, your mom, and that affected you, and how many other people and how has your life changed from one death. And so if you can connect it to that, then commemorating of any kind of death. Is... on a larger scale, becomes more meaningful. [...] To me [...] it's very. Um. Mind boggling and earth shattering and I think if you can create arts that reminds people on that level it becomes more powerful [...]." [Esma]

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One can note that Mira and Šejla draw parallels between the Srebrenica genocide, the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide. However, this happens much less frequently than in the case of the MTYOL audience. Interestingly, in drawing these parallels, interviewees highlight the importance of the physical *sites of memory* (actual locations, monuments and memorials) in raising genocide awareness and pursuing prevention:

Maybe we would have to have more of such projects in general for *victims of war*. [...] Because for me, I always kind of have to think of Holocaust and [...] Holocaust studies because if you didn't talk about it, if you didn't have these monuments. It would just fall into oblivion, [...], and the same with this [...] collective memory. If there is such a thing for everyone to have that collective memory of that specific event, because a lot of people don't even know where Bosnia is like, let alone what happened there. [Mira]

That it's very important to visit it [Srebrenica] just as you would go to visit Auschwitz and other places of where genocide occurred. And because it's really important for your own personal development and for a person to understand what has really occurred and how we can remember and not forget, because it's really important not to forget, but how we can present everything that has happened to other people in the world and how they can gather more knowledge about it. [...] But I think that it's really important to visit everything there in order for you to fully understand the big picture. [Šejla]

By comparing different genocides, the interviewees draw attention to the importance of continuous education and awareness-raising to prevent oblivion. Meanwhile, physical *sites of memory* serve as tangible reminders of traumatic events, preserving the memory of suffering and ensuring that such experiences are not forgotten and will not happen again. Other parallels have also been drawn, too. For example, Jasmina related to the sensitive municipality where she comes from.<sup>233</sup> Fatima emotionally connects with the contemporary Ukrainian context to that of BiH in the 1990s: "I feel horrible when I see footage from Ukraine when I see those women and those children—it brings back memories of what we went through." She adds, "unfortunately, there are always crazy people. When I see people

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<sup>233</sup> "I'm also coming from that kind of municipality, where it's really hard to talk about victims from all three sides, but recently we kind of... I found out that we had some exhibition in Ljubuški and I was really proud that these topics are becoming more inclusive in those areas and that the NGO's are collaborating among each other. So hopefully. We will [...] see that also in Srebrenica. I mean Srebrenica that has really nice non-governmental sector, a lot of NGOs are doing incredible things and they're collaborating with other NGOs in the country. I met some of them. I think *Sara association* is really good." [Jasmina]

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from Ukraine, those buildings and that destruction. It's all happening again. God help us."

During our interview, Fatima told a very moving story about her refugee experience, her family and her teenage nephew, who was killed during the genocide. She also recalled a recent trip to Slovakia, where she met a professor from Ukraine who was cleaning the hotel. She could relate to his experience as she had been through a similar one. Meanwhile, Adna reflects that American audiences are pretty detached from the human suffering in BiH and now in Ukraine, while other countries may relate more to it. The overall level of empathy is shaped by each country's socio-political and historical experiences and by how effectively political elites and the media communicate the suffering of others. Cultural similarities and differences undoubtedly influence the choice of whose suffering to empathize with.

The interviews enriched the research with information about other non-traditional memory practices related to the Srebrenica genocide. [Annexe 17](#) presents this additional information.

### ***7.2 My Thousand Year Old Land Reception***

The play made a highly favourable impression on all the respondents. They found it touching, interesting, engaging, moving, humanising, compelling, meaningful, thought-provoking, discomforting yet worthwhile. Many highlighted that the play brought a deeper understanding of history. As already mentioned, the play is a documentary, so it is based on the collected historical facts, the research carried out by the creators, and the testimonies gathered from the Srebrenica genocide and Bosnian War survivors. A significant number of respondents mentioned that they are interested in history (professionally or personally), and many came to MTYOL to deepen their knowledge about the Bosnian War. Interviewees said the play helped them understand chronology and the course of war, its impact on people's lives, and the following consequences. "I learnt to that people who were once neighbors and educators became torturers and collaborators," specifies Eleanor. So, in addition to a thorough

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documentary layer, the play was good in its ability to grasp and show how people are set against each other and how mass atrocities become possible.

Returning to the question of deepening historical knowledge, not all respondents found the play clarifying. MEP David Hallam commented that he missed a broader political context, while Elizabeth, who has a history education, said that the lack of context confused her.

I think that it might have been useful to have heard from the Dutch who were supposed to be providing this ‘safe haven.’ [...] [I]t would have been interesting to have had a bit more about the politics that led to the decision to let the Serbs take these men away. And how that fell and how that broke down. So, I think that was one of the missing elements of the play, which I think would have been interesting to know more about. [David Hallam]

[Th]at conflict which I still found confusing, and I don’t understand what is a *Bosnian Serb*? [...] [W]here did the Croatians come into it? Why was the hatred of the Muslims? Who was instigating that? I know Milošević Slobodan was a seriously evil contender in this. But it couldn’t have been him alone. There must have been others who had old grudges, they wanted to settle. And I don’t understand what motivated them really. [Elizabeth]

In my opinion, the problem may be that the play is not only about the genocide in Srebrenica but also about the wider scope of the Bosnian war, which is very complex and involves many factors, as explained in Chapter 2 (see 2.1). Accordingly, the MTYOL aims to raise awareness not only about the Srebrenica genocide but also about other crimes that took place in Bosnia, which is laudable, given the limited awareness of these crimes abroad, but it is also a challenging ambition to present such a complex subject in a single play. Perhaps the most problematic aspect is that MTYOL only deals with crimes against Bosniaks, although it is known that there have been crimes on all sides and from all sides. Meanwhile, the Bosniaks tend to be seen as passive victims, although, as noted in Chapter 2, there were cases of resistance. Lejla from BiH also noted a risk of generalisation and stereotypes in MTYOL:

[...] It’s easy to paint someone as an enemy, and that’s maybe what I’m sad about that just because someone did something, we tend to paint the whole nation as an enemy, but we forget often that victims are from each side and from at every, every part where the conflict is happening. [Lejla]

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It must be stressed that she does not accuse the play of doing this, but she sees the risk, the open door to stereotyping. And this Lejla's observation leads us back to Elizabeth's initial question regarding the identity of a Bosnian Serb and the appearance of Croats in the context of the Bosnian War. A focus on all sides of the conflict would solve this problem, I believe.

The audience also found MTYOL emotional on different levels: on a personal level, emotional because of witnesses' testimonies on the stage and due to the usage of props referring to the personal items of the victims. Lejla, a respondent from BiH, claimed to have experienced unexpected emotional depth through the play. At least nine respondents found the play very powerful because of the embodied women's voices:

[T]his play is so powerful in showing that it's not often women, who initiate these appalling conflicts and the futility of war. [Elizabeth]

[...] [T]his play really has depicted that the women have to be strong. [Margaret]

The fact that it was women's experience, was important; intergenerational that there were three generations of women [...] trying to make sense of [...] their experience and keeping that their culture alive. [Alice]

So, I remember three women, and I remember it was, it's very female driven performance. Uhm, partly for obvious reasons, because the women were the ones who survived. [...] And who... I hear to tell the story. And who are the survivors. And the reminder of the continuity of life, but also a painful reminder to the international community of the pain that has been caused. To that area. [Zora]

My reflection on the play was that it was, rightly so, taken from the women's perspective and this was both sobering and enlightening in equal measure. It is not often you hear of an event like the Srebrenica massacre told from a woman's perspective and I believe it is something we need to hear more of, if only to highlight how women are often deliberately targeted during war and also to tell the stories to counter-act the nay-sayers who have cropped up like they have over the Jewish Holocaust. [Albert]

Respondents correctly observe that women have historically been overlooked as active agents in the context of war. Nevertheless, their experiences, the gendered dimensions of conflict, are central to understanding the conflict and collective memory. As described by respondents, MTYOL powerfully illuminates the women's perspective, emphasizing their roles as survivors, memory keepers, and voices of resilience. While often not the instigators of war,

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women bear war consequences by becoming key figures in maintaining cultural continuity, rebuilding the community, and challenging dominant narratives. Also, the intergenerational aspect highlighted by Alice reveals the women's role in passing down war memories, ensuring that future generations do not forget the atrocities and their impacts. As Albert suggests, hearing women's voices is essential, both to expose the targeted violence against them and to challenge denialism. By embodying women's voices, MTYOL counters the historical silencing of gender perspectives and pays tribute to women's resilience.

The audience perceived the play as both entertaining (*wryly humorous* and *witty*) and thought-provoking (*moving, sobering, authentic*): "[I]t was not the usual theatre that you went to to be entertained. It was more emotional." [Margaret] "But it was entertaining, in the sense that the wonderful singing that they did, and the dancing, they showed the joyful side of companionship and love as well as the tragic side of loss. So, to that extent, although very serious performance, it was in some ways uplifting, and it just leaves you asking: Why did they do it? What did they gain?" [Elizabeth]. While some spectators found it hopeful, some saw no happy ending.

MTYOL received a fair amount of professional theatre criticism. Respondents viewed the play as a high-quality performance with high-standard acting.<sup>234</sup> They appreciated Moffat's effective directing and mastery of emotional transitions on stage. Additionally, David Hallam noted and appreciated that Moffat often lets the audience meet and engage with actors after the show. The audience prayed for effective scenography and innovative representative ways

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<sup>234</sup> "It's always a very, very high standard of acting she [Moffat] produces. [David] / [...] I loved the vibrancy of the actresses [...]." [Zora] / "I loved the set and the actress made you connect instantly." [James] / "I felt the actors in particular were well cast." [Thomas] / "The three female actors lent pathos as well as humour to carry over the stories of numerous people who experienced the horrors of that period in time in Bosnia; their folk songs punctuating the stories, giving us enough breathing space to absorb them and appreciate them: hearing Bosnian spoken lent authenticity to it all." [Albert] / "The actors each gave a very strong performance. Speaking clearly and conveyed the difficulties and yet producing humour in the most dire circumstances." [Sophia]



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to portray actual events that were relatively minimal but powerful. A few were fascinated by the usage of shadow theatre, its interaction and engagement with the audience.<sup>235</sup> Also, respondents noted the importance of upholding Bosnian culture and identity, giving a voice to Bosnians and authentic casting, and using the Bosnian language. Many valued singing and poetry, and one found the reading of the victims' names powerful. They also found learning from the testimonies effective. The play seemed to leave a lasting impression on most of the audience. Many indeed admired MTYOL and would encourage their peers to see the play.

The play also earned some constructive criticism. While some found MTYOL generally easy to follow [Nora, Alice, Lejla], others [also Nora, Alex, Thomas] struggled to keep up with different roles and stories: "I was just a bit confused at times, [...] because the three actors played different characters [...] also different stories, accounts and then there was a few moments where I wasn't sure whether [...] they were playing the same person or whether it was telling someone else's story" [Alex]. Another disadvantage mentioned by several people was that they experienced difficulty catching the voices [Margaret, Lejla, Alice]. A couple of respondents lacked projection screen clarity. Nora found some props too modern and not authentic enough, which might be a professional deformation as an archaeologist. MTYOL additionally received professional criticism from Zora for lacking a firm direction:

I think [...] my critical approach to the way the play was executed would be mainly focusing on the structure of the play. [...] [A]s a theatre maker and as a director, I think it [...] lacked firm direction. And [...] it lacked structure that could make it far more exciting. [...] [A]s a play [...], it already has a content which is incredibly powerful. [...] I think we could have been far more in love with the characters that the actresses decided to portray for us. [...] I think [...] more rigorous thoughts could have been given to the dramaturgy of the play. [Zora]

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<sup>235</sup> "I thought that was so cool because usually you could just do a projection. But this was like much more interactive and it was really powerful. I remember that like just blew my mind when they were doing it out of like, just with their hands. It was amazing." [Lily] / "Yeah, the bits with the sheet and doing the silhouettes behind it a bit more of that would have made it very engaging." [Alice] / "I love the ending [...] this was really powerful with the sheet and with the lights and when the actresses showed just the items, [...] like the boots, the belt, the items that were left. And [...] it was really sad and... [...] but it was eye opening as well." [Lejla]

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Alice could not connect to the play as the majority of respondents did. She also reflected on potential reasons for this: “[I]t didn’t have a huge impact on me in the sense... I was expecting it to be more traumatic really, and [...] show more anguish than it [...] did, but... [...] I enjoyed it. Yeah, the bits of it... but I struggled to remember, to be honest. But you know, it can be all sorts of factors, [...] the mood, you’re in for the night, tired [...]”. Alice also compares MTYOL with another play by Moffat<sup>236</sup> that had a higher impact on her: “[...] comparing it to the play about the mine disaster, it [MTYOL] didn’t [...] have as much emotional impact, strangely. [...] I did enjoy the play about Srebrenica, but. I felt. It didn’t have quite the same powerful emotional impact on me that the other one did actually.” So, Alice experienced the disappointment deeply on an emotional level.<sup>237</sup> While this may be due to the reasons she identified above, it could also be influenced by cultural differences, cultural knowledge, and her geographical and emotional closeness to that culture. Alice also remarked that MTYOL could be even more visual, so it could also engage younger children.

The majority of respondents reconstructed the play fairly accurately from memory. They characterised the staging of historical events, the depiction of personal and family experiences, and the temporal and narrative structure. Respondents characterised the atmosphere as dynamic: sombre, subdued, nostalgic, emotionally intense and quiet but at the same time engaging, uplifted, enraptured and spellbound. The participants’ answers defined the whole range of feelings they experienced during the performance: sadness, apprehension,

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<sup>236</sup> “[...] [N]ear Newcastle-under-Lyme there’s [...] a small village where there was a coal mine and there was a [...] disaster back in... It was during the First World War, I think. Something like 1915. [...] There was the 100th anniversary and Sue [Moffat] put on a play, which was about remembering that disaster. And [...] I can still remember the play quite vividly, actually. Yeah, it was very, quite emotional. Yeah, it was good. [...]” [Alice]

<sup>237</sup> “I guess they were talking much more about their way of life, not just about the impact, but the slaughter of their [...] men folk on them [...], they were talking about coffee. Well by making... How they made coffee and other things. So, I mean, talking about coffee is not going to have the same emotional impact as talking about the death of your men folk in tragic, you know, terrible circumstances. But I do understand that that there were... The aim of the play about Srebrenica is to keep the culture alive and to remember how they lived their lives. Not... it wasn’t just about the death of their men folk, I guess. [...] I expected it to be different from that rate because it’s about an horrific event. And I expected more anguish [...] and sorrow [...]” [Alice]

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dismay, anger, inspiration, hope and empowerment through those experienced emotions, which develop into a shared experience or even emotional catharsis. Many spectators found MTYOL emotional, informative, engaging and reflective; thus, they quickly identified with the characters and felt empathy for them. The play became a preventive reflection on war atrocities and a thoughtful reminder about the fragility of peace. A few respondents prudently reflected on trigger warnings and trauma, as, for example, Zora:

I remember that my friend [...] was uncomfortably jumping in the seat when she has been reminded of the war. Ammm... with some sounds. It reminded me of the triggering power of theatre. What I've also been thinking, part of me was thinking within the show: 'Oh my God, shouldn't they have put [...] trigger warnings, especially for the survivors?' But then it was really interesting artistically that they made a decision not to do that because they were aware that a survivor made the play and that people will be reminded of these things but that is a process of life. [...] But obviously in the context of *My Thousand Year Old Land* [...] [w]e kind of very much know what we're going to see. [Zora]

During the play, Zora, Lejla and Elizabeth also contemplated the 'why' of conflict. Lejla from BiH claims to have had a cathartic experience: "And at one point I was even crying. And I was like, 'OK, I need to stop because people think I'm crazy,' but it enters into a level under your skin, let's say, and you... what I'm happy about is that it's a cathartic experience because it makes you think after it". Zora from Croatia felt validated by hearing the local language, highlighting the importance of validating underrepresented communities on the stage. For Sturdy Colls, MTYOL also evoked nostalgic feelings: "[...] I hadn't been to Bosnia for quite a long time. [...] [A]fter the sort of initial scenes, which obviously are very painful, and then you were immersed in [...] the coffee scene and [...] the sort of all the, the jovial elements of it, for me it was like being back in Sarajevo, which was a lovely feeling because it was somewhere that I have wanted to go back to for a really long time" [CSC]. As a result, the audience experienced different and varied emotions during MTYOL, which signals that the play managed to touch and impact the audience.

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The audience seemed to understand what Moffat and Haughton intended to say and received the intended message. Interviewees claimed that MTYOL aimed to raise awareness that conflict can happen anywhere (despite past peace), explain the genocide from the survivors' point of view, foster empathy, remind unredeemed guilt of the international community, remember and humanise victims and survivors, show resilience and the beauty of life, search for truth and hope for the future, illustrate the effects of genocide and war, tell the story of Bosnian people, embracing their values and traditions, and inform about the events that happened. The highlight of women's strength and resilience did not leave the audience indifferent. Additionally, some remark that the play depicted dehumanisation and the loss of civilisation; it explored disillusionment and historical awareness by portraying human fragility and vulnerability. Lejla noted that MTYOL emphasised healing through sharing, the importance of dialogue and memory and the embracement of resilience and advocacy.

Respondents had different views on the general audience's understanding. Nora claims that the audience had some preconceived knowledge about the Bosnian War so they could perceive the general idea of the play. Maria shared a similar view: "[The audience] got it's message across well with blend of horror of atrocities." Alex Haycock had mixed feelings about the audience's initial understanding; however, he notes that the Q&A panel helped to clarify the content: "I think some did [understand] and I think some needed, I think the question, the Q&A panel afterwards helped a lot of other people then understand the true meaning and behind it through; you know, the little confusions and they may have had all the preconceptions they had before they came to watch it. But I think overall, [...] people understood [...] what was happening and why it's important." Lily believes that the Q&A part revealed the depth of the audience's comprehension: "[...] during the Q&A portion, it seemed like everybody there was very introspective and sitting with the gravity of the play and the event itself. So, [...] I think people got the message [...] and we're very impacted by it

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from what they were saying in the aftermath.” Nevertheless, there were also doubts about

how much the audience could understand the play and how much context it had before.

According to Lejla and Alex, MTYOL was inspiring to delve further into the history of the conflict but suggested that some prior knowledge and research were necessary to grasp its details fully. They agreed that while MTYOL could evoke strong emotions, prior

understanding would enhance the audience’s comprehension and experience. In another

instance, when evaluating the audience’s understanding, David takes a different perspective to discuss a kind of selective ignorance or emotional resistance to entirely acknowledging

brutal truths:

Well, I think that there’s two things about an audience and there’s two things about a play [...]. And that is, there are things you understand, but then there are other things you don’t want to understand. You don’t want to know that people can be so brutal. But you do want to know that brutal things happen, so there is a tension there. After the play we got in our nice car and we drove off. And we got to our home and it’s nice and warm. And we had a cup of tea and we went to bed and, we were comfortable. We were safe, we were secure. That’s what didn’t happen to people in Srebrenica on that day. I mean, it had been happening to them for years and years, but then suddenly it all changed. That’s why it was discomfoting play. [David]

One may conclude by Thomas’ words: “[It’s] hard to say [whether they fully understood it.

Certainly, the points raised at the end were poignant.” Despite their understanding of the

play, several respondents (Sturdy Colls, James, Thomas, Albert and Sophia) said it was well

received. As Zora rightly points out, one of the reasons for this may have been that many had

some knowledge before coming and a preconceived sympathy for the victims, as Albert

notes. Naturally, the majority of spectators seemed curious and attentive. Zora observes a

growing appetite for such stories in the UK:

I think it’s beautiful to see that there is appetite for [...] these stories and especially [...] like this was a matinée performance in sort of non-major city theatre. I mean Newcastle[-under-Lyme] is fairly big, but it’s [...] not a major city in UK. So, there is definitely appetite. That people [...] are keen to be [...] educated [...]. I do think that theatre is an important step in telling the stories and educating people around issues that might not be familiar with [...]. [Zora]

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Alex Haycock shares similar concerns and notes that the evening show was even better attended than the afternoon one: “[T]he evening show it was sold out and I think that says a lot about the local community [...]. Some of them have just gone to the theatre because that’s what they do. I think for a lot of people [...] it’s an interesting event. They might not know much about it. They’ve gone to learn something new, to experience a different type of performance. And I think that’s good.” Sturdy Colls, Eleanor, Maria and Albert think that MTYOL moved the audience emotionally and provoked thought. The audience was impressed by the depth and power of the piece, and by how clever it was constructed, notes Sturdy Colls [CSC]. Additionally, Zora felt much honouring in the audience.

When asked about the audience’s perception of the play, Albert immediately reflected on the actual impact: “Yes, broadly speaking they did [*understand the message*] but how many of the audience would use that understanding to promote better community cohesion is a matter of conjecture.” This quote leads to further reflection on the perceived impact. Respondents distinguish several impacts of MTYOL: significance of remembrance and accountability, educational<sup>238</sup> and empathetic impact (among different age groups)—learning about the Bosnian War and its consequences, impact of violence on cultural heritage, informing about the consequences of war and fostering empathy, informing foreign audiences about the Bosnian experience—awareness of peace and gratitude, emotional and intellectual impact. It is worth noting that for David Hallam,<sup>239</sup> a former Member of the European Parliament (MPE), the play had a redemptive effect:

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<sup>238</sup> A few respondents mentioned educational activities performed by Aida Salkić Haughton outside the scope of MTYOL (e.g., being a guest lecturer or teaching a course at the university) but closely related to it.

<sup>239</sup> David Hallam was elected to the EP in 1994 and served a five-year term. During our interview, he shared that the attack on Srebrenica was a break in this philosophy (see [Annexe 18](#) for full citations):

“[W]hen I saw what happened in Srebrenica [...] I’ve gone from a position of believing that you shouldn’t have an army and you shouldn’t be involved in military activity, to saying ‘yes, we do need an army and that army needs to be trained and it needs to have the best possible weapons in order to achieve the job.’ But it does mean that we have an obligation in a Western society, or any society, to make sure that our army is under civilian control and that is and is accountable to the people rather than accountable to an individual.” [David Hallam]

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[F]or me, Srebrenica was quite an important stepping stone in my theology and in my philosophy, and at that point I was aged 51-52 or my late 40s. I've taken a pacifist position since I became a Christian, when I was 17. So, 30 years of philosophy was effectively thrown out the window. In just a few days, as I saw what was happening in Srebrenica. When I went to see the play, it was almost a redemption for the fact that my inactivity beforehand when I was arguing that you shouldn't be using weapons to defuse the situation, to a situation where I feel 'yes, we should have sent soldiers in, they should have been highly trained. We should have been ready to fight the people who were the perpetrators of the violence.' [David Hallam]

Several respondents related the issues portrayed in the play to current problems in the UK.

They identified issues such as isolationism, divisions and Brexit, antisemitism (especially during the COVID pandemic), xenophobia, lack of education, misinformation, political apathy, generational inequity, inflammatory rhetoric and its potential to incite violence. In addition, interviews and questionnaires illustrated a broad spectrum of multi-directional parallels that respondents drew. Firstly, two respondents have a personal connection to Holocaust history and survivors. Daniel belongs to the Jewish community in the UK, and Zora is partly Jewish: "I was born in Croatia, I'm part Jewish. So, from that side I can very much feel. Been lucky to have been alive because somebody has provided hiding place for my grandmother within independent Croatia, a Republic of Croatia that was eradicating Jews. But I don't have immediate, obviously experience of wearing David star or being classified as unwanted Muslim." So, they share the inherited or post-generational trauma. Secondly, during our conversations, a few respondents discussed the roots of genocide and compared the Holocaust, other genocides and mass atrocities:

[...] [B]ut all genocides are the same with the motives and things. [Alex Haycock]

Well, they've all got the same causes. Separation, division, seeing somebody else as being different. [...] the causes are the same. It's seeing someone has been "different." Then you get the separation, then you get jealousy and envy, and you get the hatred, and so on. And, 'oh, well, he or they, they're different.' 'They've, [...] got an easier life, they've got a better job, they've got more money.' You know, 'they're not the same as us.' And all of it started like that. You're Darfur and Rwanda, Cambodia, got Pol Pot, money, if you've got dictators involved in it adds another element to it. And... it is the outsider. It is the same for that reason. I think the reason why the Jewish Holocaust is mentioned a lot is because it was the first big one that was recognised. But the thing is you see, I always visit the Armenian community when I'm in Jerusalem. And I've chatted to them about their [...] genocide and they've got posters up about it and their

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Armenian quarter in Jerusalem, I've eaten at their restaurants, because they're really nice. And I talked to them and I think that should be a part of it as well. It may have been smaller in number. And of course, there is a problem there because it was the Ottomans who were involved in that and then [...] Germany was allied with because it was World War One [...]. But when you look at the atrocities [...] unfortunately I've seen some of the photographs of it and they stick with you forever; so yes, these are all comparable because they've all got the same reason: they're these people are different. So therefore, there's something wrong with them. [Daniel]

[...] sometimes even their own neighbours turned on them, and that's a common occurrence, sadly, with any sort of genocide situation. We read the same in Rwanda and, during the Jewish Holocaust in Europe. People had the same experience where they thought that society was OK and everybody was together and then suddenly, they discovered that they've been *othered*. I think that's the word *othered*: OTHERED, and they become an enemy. So, you have to kill them, and that the solution is killing people. Or if not killing them, at least telling them to go away, to leave their homes. [David Hallam]

Several respondents were highly aware of the international context, from Africa to Russia's war in Ukraine. The following was mentioned several times in particular. Respondents compare the Russo-Ukrainian War with the Bosnian War. Firstly, they nourish empathy for Ukrainians as they do for Bosnians affected by the war. On the other hand, conversations with the audience also suggest a sense of understanding and empathy for Russian citizens who were drawn into the war against their will and have experienced human losses.<sup>240</sup> Similarly, several respondents lacked other perspectives on the play, which is already mentioned at the beginning of this section on MTYOL. Thus, it seems the respondents remain critical and mindful, not easily swayed by dehumanizing narratives. Secondly, interviewees connected media witnessing the Bosnian War, which seems even more intense and abundant in the case of Ukraine due to advanced technologies. Thirdly, respondents reflect on the fragility of peace and the importance of preventive education. Elizabeth expresses shock about the ongoing war crimes in Ukraine (she names them as genocide) and does not comprehend the nature of that. Finally, Daniel relates Vladimir Putin's background and actions in Ukraine to the tensions in the Balkans, suggesting that past conflicts may influence

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<sup>240</sup> “[I]t made me see them as real people who really suffered in just the way Ukrainian and Russian families are suffering now, because these families have no control over where their sums are, are sent.” [Elizabeth]



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Putin's motivations in the region. Indeed, Daniel drew even more exciting parallels between the Bosnian War and the Second World War. For example, he focuses on good harvest or economic improvements prior to both conflicts:

And like she said [protagonist in MTYOL], when the [...] harvest was so good, the older people say, 'oh [...] something's gonna happen,' and actually, it's funny about that. Because my grandparents had the same thing happened in 1939. They had a wonderful summer. And [...] everything was fantastic, the sun was shining, it was hot, didn't rain as much as it normally does. And the harvest was great, [...] everything was going very, very well. People were actually very, very slightly better financially as well as some of the austerity the 30s were eased a bit. Partly because politically, there's a national government for a long time. And that helped a bit, but so you're not got the ideology of the different parties. And [...] then suddenly, they were plunged into [...] war. And like they were saying today [in MTYOL], the Bosnian war started in similar ways. So, it's funny how nature and circumstances and chance and look, give us this terrific contrast. [Daniel]

Margaret and Elizabeth also establish links between the Bosnian War and the Second World War, emphasizing women's role in post-conflict reconstruction in the UK and Greece.<sup>241</sup>

They represent the feminist voice, arguing that while women tend not to start wars, they suffer most from them and have to deal with reconstruction after conflicts are over, which is also depicted in MTYOL and has been discussed recently. "[...] And then then the men come back [after the war] [...], they just don't want the women big, strong anymore, do the back in the kitchen and having the babies. [Elizabeth] Hopefully, the time has changed a little bit. [Margaret] Not in Iran and not in Afghanistan. [Elizabeth]," respondents discuss the persistence of discrimination against women in the international context.

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<sup>241</sup> "I'm a war baby from the Second World War between England and Germany. And so many of my family were widowed. And the women picked up the pieces afterwards. And they worked in factories, and they ran schools, they worked in shops. Sometimes their husbands came back, sometimes they didn't, what the women carried on in the way, this play really has depicted that the women have to be strong. You know, you've got a family, you've got to feed the family." [Margaret] / "In Crete, there's a valley where the Germans arrived, and they killed the men in the valley, only the women were left in villages to carry on. And there's one Memorial [...] a figure of a lady, bigger than us. [...] [I]t was the women that built up the villages afterwards, they collected the olives and they did everything." [Margaret] / "[...] there's another one also in Greece, which always makes us laugh. It's a monument to the women who supported their men during the war. And it's this giant Amazonian woman, striding along. On the back is a box, haversack and guess what she's carrying in her hand? An iron! Always good to go to be slaughtered with a freshly ironed shirt." [Elizabeth] "And if they think of an iron as a suitable thing to put in a woman's hand, [...] [i]t must have been a male, who did that!" [Margaret]

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The respondents' answers and their backgrounds suggest that the MTYOL spectators were educated and well-informed about current and historical events and, therefore, able to draw many parallels that correlate with different contexts. It is unclear how the play works for less educated audiences. However, the responses received suggest that the play evokes strong emotions that are understandable and relatable to all, and so that all viewers can connect through an emotional experience.

### **7.3 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 and 8372/IV in Ljubljana and Osijek Reception**

Of the three performances considered, 8372 in Ljubljana received the highest evaluation. All the respondents were quite impressed by it, and it stuck in their minds. For example, Milica and Vesna highly appreciated such a personal, honest and nonjudgmental exploration of the Srebrenica genocide while opening a contemplative debate without simplistic politicisation. Vesna noted Zajc's interest in exploring dark themes like Srebrenica, which remains being weaponised for political interest. She valued Zajc's ability to bring the audience back to the fact that many people were killed rather than looking for the guilty parties. Vesna also liked Zajc's balanced and respectful approach towards Srebrenica: not making it too sappy or exploiting the tragedy, but holding the line and moderated tone. Interestingly, Vesna knew that ŠTO TE NEMA inspired Zajc's 8372 and that he intended to send the coffee to Šehović.

In addition, the respondents admired the inclusivity and participatory features of the 8372. According to Lucija, 8372 was more potent than the epilogue in a political sense and also in the sense of being an actual participatory performance. A few interviewees highlighted that 8372 generated exciting conversations and required unexpected physical engagement, creating an intense and, nevertheless, unique experience. Mara said she enjoyed the rhythmic physical endeavour combined with conversation. At the same time, Lucija noted that 8372 "was like an intense experience of boredom [...]. [T]he physical aspect of, like, grinding the

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coffee, it's also very interesting because usually you aren't physically engaged as an audience member." Milica valued the created comfort and acceptance: "I think for me it was very pleasant. I felt comfortable, especially after realising that Benjamin doesn't mind me being very opinionated." Vesna appreciated the fluidity of 8372: "You're sitting there and you saw people leaving and coming back in. And it also created that sense of [...] fluidity of people around you. [...] [T]hose are people who you're probably never going to see again because you don't know them. Just grounded coffee together for 10 minutes and that was it." Lucija concludes all the 8372 advantages in a few sentences:

I would give [...] 10 out of 10. I think it's like very spot on. It's very political. It's very regarding like the [...] actual performance, it's... the execution, the idea, the setting, everything is like. It really gives you a lot of options, but at the same time I feel that Benjamin has really thought about what he wants, how he wants to do it, what he wants to achieve and [...] it's very constructive. But at the same time, it's very open. [Lucija]

Despite many positive comments, 8372 has also received some mild criticism from Milica and Mara. Based on experience, Milica said she would prefer a traditional coffee grinder to a modern mortar and pestle. She gives a list of reasons why she thinks it would be better:

I was immediately [...] intellectually annoyed by the fact that the grinders were these stone grinders, which I always associate with some [...] world cuisine [*The World Cook?*] or this [...] hipsters in the kitchen. While for me, [...] you're supposed to grind coffee in Turkish grinder, [...] the one that looks like a cylinder. It's usually made of brass cover. The brass is very shiny. You're holding it in your hands, so after some time your hands smells certain way. It's a combination of coffee and this like metal smell. And instantly, I would be reminded [...] with like, my grandparents, my grandfather was from Muslim family. So [...] part of my identity is connected with [...] very Ottoman influenced culture and I remember this like my grandfather and grandmother. You know, sitting for half an hour and you would: *hruš, hruš, hruš*. And it's like it becomes [...] white noise that you don't hear anymore. And so there is whole ritual around... Certain way of making coffee, and for instance, if I was somebody making this performance, it would never have stone grinders, but rather, [...] like proper Bašćaršija-bought brass metal grinders. [...] So [...] usually the people bought these grinders as part of a [...] trip to Bosnia or they were given from somebody from Bosnia. And [...] for a certain period in socialist Yugoslav history [...] this was the only way you could grind coffee. There was no like [...] stone thingy [mortar and pestle]. It came in the 2000s when, [...] we started in discovering Jamie Oliver and Fusion food cuisine and so on. So, for instance, this was something that I think I did not raise as a question [in 8372]. Maybe I did later on, when discussing with Benjamin or and other people. But like, this is something that extrovert part of me would [...] comment at the very beginning, but I did not, because I also am aware that... Well, not all cultural symbols, features [...] functions in this identically same way in Serbia, and Slovenia. And in

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Bosnia. So, what I want to say is that my expectation about the grinder, maybe some other people from Serbia, Bosnia would recognise it, but not necessarily somebody from Slovenia. [...] The [...] only thing that put me a bit off was realisation that in a way, he curated this space around the table with the coffee grinders and so on, but the rest was like [...] it was another space. [Milica]

Thus, Milica believes that the traditional coffee grinder may have been much more familiar to most people in the region, but she acknowledges that may not be the case in Slovenia today.

Traditional Turkish grinder brings her many family memories and simply seems better grounded in the local culture. Overall, Milica enjoyed the performance and appreciated the created atmosphere, which is discussed further. Another critical comment came from Mara. Nevertheless, it was not about the performance itself; for her and Milica, outsiders to AGRTF, it was challenging to find and navigate where 8372 was taking place. So, she found it uninviting and unwelcoming. These two were the only critical comments directed at 8372.

*Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* received both positive and negative comments. Respondents appreciated the unique atmosphere, sensorial experience, immersive storytelling bringing the Srebrenica tragedy closer through participant engagement, and subtle and expansive way to talk about Srebrenica in the broader context: “[H]e talked about Srebrenica because that was also the main topic of it. But it wasn’t like very aggressive, [...] ‘this is about Srebrenica,’ but it was [...] very nice that he [...] widened this topic on the like [the] global problem of radical like, [...] the violence and suffering [...], sexual violence, mental violence, physical violence,” notes Teja. Nina adds that she finds the artistic way the best way to talk about such events as the Srebrenica genocide, primarily through the emotions art evokes. As the transformative power of art through stimulated emotions has already been discussed when examining the audience reception of ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL, I will not discuss it further here. According to the interviewees, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* was thought-provoking and effective. Lucija complemented Zajc’s ability to manage the audience participants and balance his roles of being a performer and doing the performance.

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Additionally, Teja valued Zajc's narrational and leading skills when introducing unexpected plot twists and the sudden shift to a more intense moment:

[...] [W]e were casually drinking coffee and talking some stupid things [...]. And then like it was just like: 'So you are the dead body now.' [...] I think it's so an element which is also quite similar to violence in general. Like everything is OK. And then just one second can change everything in the order. And I also saw how my friend was hurt when he said, like, 'you're the dead body now.' You know, 'imagine that she's gone.' Yeah, and I saw it that she did not feel well. And I was like, 'OK, wow, you can do this by one sentence.' And it's really cool. [Teja]

For Vesna, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* evoked a deeper self-reflection on her role and attitude than 8372, where she arrived late and rushed to grind the coffee without much contemplation. Teja adds that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* became an excellent close-up for 8372, giving more space for reflection: "It was nice that it was like a conclusion to this graining, not like the acting without any [...] synthesis or analysis or something. I think I made a self-analysis when I dr[a]nk the coffee [which] I [had] grained before." So, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* became a memorable continuing experience for Teja.

Despite positive feedback, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* has also attracted much criticism. Nina admired Zajc's idea but did not like the realisation. While her son was pretty impressed with the 8372, she could not say the same about the follow-up show. Nina expected a much stronger emotional connection or state for a topic like the Srebrenica genocide. Indeed, Nina, Žan, Milan and Lucija complained that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* appeared too frivolous considering the heavy topic. On the other hand, Žan reasons that "maybe that was his point. Commenting on how we just [...] go on with our lives even when there [are] atrocities going around us every day or maybe that's the defects' mechanism [...]." In turn, Milan reflects: "[...] I would probably do something more intense, something maybe more violent, but [...] that's maybe why I would do it badly." So, both Žan and Milan agree that the way that Zajc chose to do the epilogue was probably intentional and worked out well in the end. In Teja's case, being among friends created a casual setting that diminished the intensity

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of the whole experience; thus, she blamed the circumstances rather than the performance itself. Further, Lucija comments that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* seemed incomplete and lacked a connection to Srebrenica, failing to lead the story and pay respect to the victims. “It was a Part 2 of something, but if you don’t have enough references on the Part 1 [8372] then it feels kind of... not thought through enough,” she concludes. An interview with Filip, who was not close to Zajc and knew nothing about 8372, illustrates that he was confused about what was happening as an outsider. As Lucija guessed, Filip saw the fortune-telling first and foremost, thought that Zajc takes such practice seriously and eventually found such an approach unconvincing, if not ridiculous. One may say that he took the performance too seriously, but that was Filip’s view:

I think he didn’t have anything else to do a performance about and that the main thing he thought of. Maybe he wanted to raise awareness about it [*fortune telling*]. Maybe he wanted to promote. And gain money from this act in the future. Maybe he wanted to prove something to his grandmother. And I don’t know the real reason. There’s usually [...] money in the background or their own fulfilment. So, I guess those two are [...] [or] one of them is likely to be the main goal. [Filip]

A spontaneous participant not involved in the art scene and coming from the street might give a similar answer. Nonetheless, Nina remarks that such performances should be open to the general public and spontaneous participants rather than being organised for students and their professors, a closed group of regular participants. Lucija points out that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* had great potential to explore coffee themes but failed. According to her, Zajc missed the opportunity to elevate the experience to a higher level. Additionally, Lucija criticises the structure and indicates the lack of clear direction and tone-setting. Emphasizing the idea of someone missing could improve the overall performance:

He mentioned [...] that there’s usually [...] an empty chair for somebody who died. I think if there would have been an empty chair or like an empty cup, or if this idea of someone missing would be emphasised a little bit more than maybe or if we would be encouraged to talk about [...] the people in our lives that are dead, I think if this idea of the deceased would be brought in a little bit differently, it could have been interesting regarding also the venue, [...] this small dark space and fortune telling and ghosts of the people or our future or whatever, like floating around us. [Lucija]

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8372/IV has received mixed reviews, but let us begin with the positive aspects. So, Diana appreciated 8372/IV's authenticity and innovative engagement with the audience and Zajc's ability to engage participants on multiple levels simultaneously, making them feel in several places simultaneously, which validates 8372/IV as a good piece. She also highlights Zajc's courage to open up about the complex topic of Srebrenica, improvise freely, and set a calm tone. Theatre critic Igor Tretinjak also praised Zajc's calmness, which, according to him, allowed Zajc to empower the audience, making them active participants:

Benji said some [...] nice words, some very interesting words. And then he stopped. He started. To crash and crash and crash, and he was very slow [...]. So you didn't feel like he is nervous or something like that. He told me later that he was very nervous [...] [H]is steadiness and his slowness and his focus made it that everybody, a lot of people stayed and watched and think young people think: 'What happens here? It's nice, but what is happening here?' and then a lot of questions are in their heads and this is also part of [...] contemporary art, [...] that connect focus is also on relationship between stage and audience. Also it [...] can be just [...] one-way relationship, but [also] two-way [...] relationship and [...] this is [...] part where we are becoming co-authors. [Igor]

Lina points out that the tense atmosphere and the sensorial experience left an impression. She focused on the illuminated faces and hands of the participants, the natural pure graining sound, and the smell, which she expected to be stronger. Lina claims that in such a monotonous performance, she found her occupation and became engaged; therefore, her assessment is more positive than negative. Igor was fascinated by the 8372/IV's concept and Zajc's idea of reflecting on being on the wrong side of history:

[...] Benji is on the other side of history. He is like a representative of negative side of history and [...] [g]iving his hands to us like he's giving himself to us and [...] paradoxically, he doesn't have any connection with this history because he is born after Srebrenica. But he is that guy who said 'I will give you my [...] hand. I will give you. Everything that I can in [...] the name of my father,' I don't know whom. [...] Do you know that he told us at [...] the beginning that I think his father's family had connections with Srebrenica, like on Serbian side and his mother's family had [...] connections with Nazis in the Second World War. So he is completely. On the other side of the, on the wrong side of history, so concept was great for me. [Igor]

Igor also appreciated the subtle way to present the issue and set the tone for the performance, its different layers of 8372/IV and enthusiastically commented on 8372/IV potential in contemporary puppetry through the animation of the beans and the rhythmic sound.

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According to Ewan, *8372/IV* has achieved all the goals, creating an experience connecting total strangers and giving a sense of togetherness. Additionally, Ewan admired that there was no enforcement to participate: “Let’s say you got like every you got everyone a mortar and pestle and everyone was doing it at the same time. Then it becomes a factory. And then that becomes a whole different piece [...]. You’re [...] forced to have a tribute here. [...]” He appreciated the chosen materials and performance duration. So, Ewan sees *8372/IV* as a successful piece overall and would not change anything.

Nonetheless, not all attendees found *8372/IV* immersive. Lina and Elena think that the start of *8372/IV* was intriguing but that Zajc could not sustain it. They base this on so many people leaving early (whereas, according to Ewan and Igor, only a few people left). Lina, for example, says that although the concept of *8372/IV* was good, it was not fully realised and soon faded from her memory. Lina also has concerns about the dramaturgy line, structure and the atmosphere it aimed to create. Both Lina and Elena were dissatisfied with *8372/IV*’s fulfilment, especially the ending, for slightly different reasons. Lina found the ending unjustified and disrespectful. She explains that during the two-hour performance, every action people took was significant: they ground coffee beans while reflecting on post-traumatic experiences. Lina was stunned that at the end of *8372/IV*, Zajc simply took the bag of ground coffee, put it in the hands of an audience member and walked away demonstratively. “Even slamming the door. It’s maybe not that it was irritating, but I just found it a bit funny that all the time we, the audience, were encouraged to think... maybe to conceive our own position in this situation [...], and in the end, the whole attempt is just ‘poof.’ And we leave.” So, Lina lacked a thoughtful ending, which could have been minimal, but he could finish the performance with a particular thought so that the contemplation could continue after the show. Meanwhile, Elena missed completeness and good closure:

What I missed most was the completeness, the ending, and perhaps [...] making and drinking coffee [...]. Well, it’s the physical work, and it would be nice once you get to



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the end of it, there is this coffee cup [...]. [Y]ou associate the scent of the coffee with the coffee cup and you... [...] not just to grind it, but to grind it and to arrive at some kind of result. [...] [The fact that] one of the spectators is just handed that [coffee] bag [...]. It feels... that it was a waste of time [...]. [Elena]

Remembering how Zajc encoded 8372 (and other versions of it), this was precisely one of the aims of the performance—to expose the meaninglessness of the victims’ deaths. Although Elena remained dissatisfied with 8372, it was one of its aims (in addition to making the participants struggle and feel uncomfortable) that was achieved. Similarly to Lina, Elena also commented on the theatrical exit, which did not fit in with the naturalness of the show and caused a dramatic change in tone, disrupting the contemplative atmosphere and bringing the audience back to reality rather than leaving them with lingering questions or reflections. Meanwhile, Igor did not see such an ending as unnatural and had no pretensions. However, that only confirms the participants’ different sensitivities and interpretations.

Most respondents remembered Zajc’s performances quite well and could reconstruct what happened; those who remembered less were generally not very impressed by them. Extensive audience recollections can be found in [Annexe 19](#). Most attendees understood the performances similarly to what Zajc intended. According to them, the point of 8372 was to honour and commemorate the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, to raise awareness and to create a collective memory around experiences that are overlooked in everyday life:

[C]ommemoration, obviously, but that was its intent, commemorating the genocide in Srebrenica. Bringing attention to it or [...] reminding us of it and of similar such atrocities and you know, the banality of it. How like a little thing like coffee can trigger, you know, something dark from the past. [Žan]

The first performance [8372] was very clear with its message [...]. About the violence that took place in Bosnia and the number [...], it was really poignant with the use of the coffee beans. [Jana]

It was very clear it was [...] [h]onouring the Srebrenica genocide, [...] I mean, honouring the victims [...]. [Lucija]

I think it’s all about community and [...] collective memory of something which we don’t realise in everyday life or we realise it too [...] little. [...] I found it like a relation

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with something which is [...] history, which we don't have any like connection with it. And like application [...] of this catastrophe on today. So, on our memory [...]. [Teja]

8372/IV's participants interpreted it quite similarly. They primarily addressed the intention to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide, honour its victims and pay tribute to lost memories.

Interviewees note that 8372/IV aimed to raise awareness to encourage collective reflection on collective guilt and responsibility [Diana, Lina], which simultaneously became an act of personal redemption in public:

I think that he wanted to wash a bit, wash hands from his ancestors. [Igor]

I mean, he made this performance because. He has some family trauma [...] to do with this massacre and the Bosnian War [...]. [T]here are two lines in his family that come from [...] the oppressors who were actually responsible for some of the killings. So [...] It's a very personal thing for him and [...] to accept this past of his, to be aware of his roots, [...] and [...] to [...] make something of it in a performance [...] it's [...] his way of... [...] Well, not only honouring the victims, but just maybe apologise. [...] You can't change the past, but [...] the only thing you can do is just make sure that these things don't happen again in the future. So, I guess [...] by raising awareness through [...] these performances, [...] tell people about this and making them feel certain things. And contribute to that. [...] Now it's a pretty powerful thing and also [...] quite brave. I would say to bring something so personal, [...] and show it to people. [Diana]

Ewan and Diana admit that talking to Zajc after 8372/IV, when working on their critical writings, allowed them to discover the details they did not get on the show. This is probably why they found the 8372/IV even more exciting. Also, Ewan found out that the original Zajc performance was intended to be the companion piece to ŠTO TE NEMA; however, he believes that 8372 is strong on its own.

Lina reflects on collectivity, its search for meaning and the depiction of meaninglessness, which was the point of 8372/IV: "Togetherness. Just working together, which is kind of pointless. Because why should we be rubbing these beans when it is very superfluous and unnecessary work. So, this togetherness and trying to find the togetherness in the meaning of a work that somehow doesn't exist." Due to the unfavourable conditions (heat, lack of water, darkness, discomfort), Elena admits that the main point remained unclear to her. Although she acknowledges that Zajc presented his intention, she lacked the resonance. When asked for

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her opinion on what it was all about, Elena associated 8372/IV with labour and determination to carry out a task under any conditions. That is an interesting observation and proof that art can resonate with each viewer in its own way.

The respondents associated *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* with remembering the first piece of 8372, representing links to BiH and the meaning of Bosnian coffee rituals bringing families and groups of people together, revealing ignorance and powerlessness over atrocities, portraying the ease of forgetting tragedies, conveying loss and pain of missing everyday moments with people who are no longer with us due to genocide and not only, making Srebrenica genocide more relatable in this way<sup>242</sup> and concerted rejection of violence. Some respondents found that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* highlight memory and remembrance in everyday practices. Daria notes that “[...] it had a lot to do with everyday life and practices and objects and how they [...] are full of [...] history and remembrance, and that... There are lots of opportunities to [...] give credits to this [...] complicated history, and [...] remembering this complex and sometimes extremely sad history. Commemorating it, doesn’t mean that you cannot enjoy the actual practices.” This resembles Sosa’s (2024) research on artistic ways to evoke emotions and commemorate tragic events. Although Sosa mainly explores the phenomenon of subversive laughter and tears, here we encounter a coffee ritual, which is enjoyable in itself, while the conversation over coffee may become a kind of act of memory. Daria elaborates further on Zajc’s effort to create that shared tangible collective memory through sensory experience:

It felt to me that there was a big emphasis [...] on texture and touch. So, there was a textured kind of fabric on the table. And then also touching the coffee, [...] everything

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<sup>242</sup> “For me, it was the moment when [...] you realised that [...] what happened to those people is that how it really affected their lives [...], that you miss someone that was your husband, that was really close to you. And maybe the point was just that [...] you enjoy [...] so much drinking coffee with someone you love. And then when you lose this someone, the hardest thing is that you don’t have him anymore in those everyday routines, just like drinking coffee with him, which is really hurtful, [...]. That was for me [...], I really felt this. ‘Ohh if I would lose my company for coffee that would be hurtful’ and this is maybe the best way [...] to represent, you know, the feelings of some someone else’s pain of someone else, maybe.” [Petra]

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there was an emphasis on [...] materials and senses from [a] sense of coffee to the sense of touching, [...] all these different textures. So maybe [...] he'd spend a lot of time thinking about how to create memory in a sense that it wouldn't be like a [...] fake memory. So, we're not being immersed into a Bosnian [...] household during or right after the war or anything. We're not doing that, but we are, [...] starting out from the contemporary moment. And then we're thinking about how we can make [...] these memories from the past, more tangible, and he used lots of these different elements that can be, I think, anchored in people's memories. So [...] maybe that was the point in the sense of the added value of this performance with regards to the other materials that we have and that can help us remember those events. [Daria]

In this way, Zajc not only stimulates the memory of the genocide, but he also wants to create a new memory with his participants, through which they may associate with an event that took place 30 years ago. Daria's interpretation coincides with Zajc's remark that he did not want to fake Bosnian culture but rather embrace the Slovenian coffee practice in his performance and create an experience of having coffee together. However, it is vital to remember that Daria is a researcher who deals with similar issues in her work; thus, she reads between the lines much better than the average person. For Filip, *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* seemed to promote the practice of reading from coffee grounds, but nothing was very profound. Lucija agrees about the unclear purpose of the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* and says that she found it confusing: "[I]f I wouldn't have the experience of the first one [8372], I would be that it's about Benjamin's grandmother and like telling your future out of a coffee cup and... Making up stories." Meanwhile, Lucija's friend, who is interested in fortune-telling, indeed got fascinated by reading the cups and wanted to know some practical nuances. So naturally, performance resonates very differently depending on background and interests, as Hall's (1973) model postulated.

Regarding the impact, interviewees reveal that 8372 was memorable, commemorative and had an emotional and experiential impact rather than an educational one. However, Jure claims that 8372 inspired him to learn more about and reflect on the Srebrenica genocide. Also, Jure found 8372 more thought-provoking than *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. "And yet I think that I started to think about it only after the end of the performance, only after I

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went out. During that performance, I was probably just [...] searching for some meaning and associations and stuff like that. And after it, I think I started to maybe go [...] much more in-depth,” he says. So in Jure’s case, the performance had an after-effect of interest in the topic.

Lucija explains that 8372 had an emotional and metaphorical impact of meaningless death:

I really love the first one [8372] just because you had the feeling of [...] all of this effort then going in vain, [...] you saw this big pile of coffee and we didn’t drink [it/coffee] [...]. So [...] on this metaphoric or symbolic level it really connects well with all the people who lost their lives [...], so you have this great [...] potential of [...] great experience of like enjoying the coffee. But then you’re left with just a lot of, [...] physical or emotional pain. So, for me, this is like all it ticks all the boxes of like a good performance or a good message or an idea. [Lucija]

Ironically, for Elena, the sense of meaninglessness became the source of criticism in 8372/IV.

Thus, although the participants saw similar meanings, they evaluated them differently: Elena negatively and Lucija positively. Regarding the 8372/IV impact, the respondents noted the collective reflection on war and mediative reflection on collective responsibility and emotional atmosphere. Meanwhile, a few participants identified a thought-provoking impact, reflecting on avoidance and ignorance. As the 8372 crew, they also highlighted emotional and experiential impact rather than educational. However, according to *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* participants, the performance raised awareness about the Srebrenica genocide and the number of victims, reminding them about Srebrenica and the ongoing current atrocities. It served as exploratory reflection without accusation and allowed relaxed and non-confrontational talk about Srebrenica.

It must be said that most of the participants in all three performances were fascinated by the created atmosphere: dim lighting, smell of coffee and cosiness. The atmosphere was undoubtedly the strength of all Zajc’s performances. In 8372, all the respondents found the ambience inviting, relaxing, comforting, cosy and calm. Some note that the untidiness contributed to cosiness and associated the place with a bunker or even a womb: “It was warm, dark. It was almost like a womb, that was the feeling, and the smell of coffee was

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everywhere” [Milica]. The respondents found the atmosphere reflective, contemplative, intimate, special and immersive. Participants felt comfortable and relaxed, but they also mentioned a moment of embarrassment when trying to figure out how the performance proceeds. They also felt intellectually engaged, emotionally charged and moved. Therefore, some were triggered and experienced anger, reflective discomfort and awkwardness. However, the contemplation was generally pleasant; they felt sociable and connected.

In the case of *8372/IV*, not all participants were satisfied with the ambience due to the heat; therefore, some described it as stuffy. Thus, for Elena, *8372/IV* was intriguing only initially. Additionally, *8372/IV* seemed improvisational, intimate, calm, and relaxing while provoking contemplative curiosity. Respondents expressed a wide range of feelings, from shared togetherness to simultaneous loneliness, from relaxation, calmness and meditation to anxiety about various issues, including unjustified ending or participants taking too long and not allowing the others to grind the beans. While Elena experienced tiring monotony after giving a try of graining the beans, Ewan, Diana, and Igor seemed to remain quite curious, active and engaged (in different ways because Igor admits to taking a nap or just being relaxed); they cherished more positive feelings than negative ones. Igor felt even more upset that he did not stay longer to grain the coffee beans. Elena highlighted her discomfort due to overwhelming conditions and lack of engagement and said she stayed only out of respect for Zajc. Diana reveals a feeling of being in a few places simultaneously, which tells her that Zajc’s performance was powerful. Lina experienced an intensive reflection on post-trauma, bridging the past and the present. Thoughts also took her to the war in Ukraine. At the same time, Lina admits that she got extraneous thoughts and mixed feelings, as the performance was monotonous. While Igor’s older colleague compared graining beans to breaking bones, Igor said he had not experienced that and that *8372/IV* meant something different for him. He was instead focused on performance fulfilment and concept.

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Replies from the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* attendees vary. Many agree that the atmosphere was pleasant, inclusive and relaxed. However, sometimes it became embarrassing, triggering and awkward, for example, at the beginning of the conversation or when Zajc tried to change the tone and talk about the death. According to Žan, if the 8372 was relaxing and smelled nice, this one felt awkward and smelled of old socks and acid coffee. Jure felt quite exposed and insecure. He admits that, as an introvert, he expected less of a participatory experience. Meanwhile, people of a more extroverted nature seem to enjoy it. As Lucija said, it was an improvised social event. Many respondents felt included and eager to participate. However, that was not the case in the first performance that Žan and I attended—the participants of that take seemed quite shy and unwilling to join the conversation. The following takes seem to have been more successful. As Daria notes, participants also significantly contributed to the pleasant atmosphere: “[E]veryone just felt really friendly and willing to be a part of a community which is great. I’m also aware that with audiences that come to such performances, this is not that [...] unusual because usually it’s people who are interested in this type of thing in the first place.” So, Daria emphasises that this was a very specific audience of regular art participants. If spontaneous participants or people with a different point of view had taken part in the performance, the atmosphere would have been very different. Nonetheless, a lot also depended on the host, Zajc. Vesna and Milan commented on the ambivalent atmosphere and the intentionally created discomfort they felt during *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*:

It was [...] sort of an ambivalent atmosphere. [...] [T]here was like this sort of uncanny feeling because it was like in the basement in like this kind of post-industrial setting. [...] You’re just like here drinking coffee, everything is relaxed. [...] Then [...] the space around it actually gave me, like, this sort of uncanny feeling. You know, when you look around outside of this bubble of warmth around the coffee, which started off as a bubble of warmth you, I got a very uncanny feeling. [Milan]

[I]t was like basically coming there for coffee. [...] And I think it served to ground you to... [...] be comfortable. Just in that position, in that remembrance of an event, but then [...] you shouldn’t really feel comfortable. You should feel uneasy about the whole situation so. You’re there. You’re eating cookies. You’re drinking coffee that tastes like

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shit admittedly, and [...] then you're like, predicting things. I mean, you're predicting somebody's death, but you're like, 'haha'. [Vesna]

Lucija also remembers feeling confused and overwhelmed. Vesna concludes that despite the discomfort experienced, the experience of *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* seemed unique.

However, as mentioned before, Nina complained about the frivolous atmosphere. She was also bothered by other participants who were laughing and showing disrespect, according to Nina. Žan and Jure admitted feeling self-conscious, embarrassed and awkward during the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*. Filip found comfort in physical space but experienced discomfort in social dynamics as he did not know anyone. Overall, respondents mentioned various feelings, including enjoyment, curiosity, and surprise: they expected it to be more similar to 8372 and/or were surprised by the lightness of the performance. Milan, who is familiar with other Zajc pieces, like *Črtomir*, expected more heaviness:

I was surprised because I knew [...] the previous performances and I knew what the topic would be, so it would be genocide in the Balkans. I was surprised with the form [...] I thought it would be much more violent. I mean, not necessarily violent in like body type violence. [...] But I was expecting it to be way more intense like emotionally and visually [...] because I saw Benjamin's performance *Črtomir*, which was very intense [...]. So I was surprised by [...] the light-hearted package [...] But like when I say the form surprised me, I meant like the setting, the atmosphere. [Milan]

Milan also describes the dynamics of the emotions he went through during the performance:

I how did I feel? So [...] the dynamics of my feelings [...] When I first came in [...] I was like, '[...] OK, we're here drinking coffee [...] just vibing. And I was kind of wondering, 'OK, what's the point of this?' [...] I was very relaxed. I didn't have, like, tension in me. I was not, [...] scared of anything. But as [...] we started [...] telling faith [...], when we started reading the cups, [...] I started sensing [...] that this is [...] the thing that will address what [...] I'm expecting will happen [...] Because [...] it slowly creeps on you. It was still effective, [...] and I just started getting more and more uncomfortable as I saw where this is going and [...] I think I got this feeling partially because I know [...] the theme and topic in my head [...]. [Milan]

So, according to Milan, even if the performance form and setting looked gentle, Zajc found his way to 'creep up on' his participants by controlling the atmosphere and emotional levels.

Daria also found the performance quite effective but in a slightly different way. She felt touched, thoughtful and reminded in a very welcoming ambience:



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Yeah, it touched me that [...] extra context about Srebrenica, felt like it was delivered in a very intimate kind of surrounding. [...] It felt it made you think about how you remember certain things and what it means to think about very sad and horrible events [...] in an environment that's otherwise welcoming and friendly and while engaging in the connectivity and I think. It's. An important thing to be doing [...]. [Daria]

Thus, respondents naturally refer to Zajc's conversational and participatory approach to memory rather than treating it as a static collection of facts to be represented. In this way, memory becomes alive, interactive and socially negotiated rather than simply displayed, as is often the case in museums and memorials. Milan's and Daria's responses resonate with what Thomas Van de Putte (2021) calls *interactional memory methods* or what Irit Dekel (2013) sees as *sphere(s) of speakability*. These two concepts indeed complement each other, as they both emphasise the role of interactivity, dialogue and evolving engagement in shaping memory experiences. While Van de Putte explores how memory emerges through everyday conversations and social interactions, Dekel examines how monuments (such as the Berlin Holocaust Memorial) do not simply represent history but instead provoke visitors to question their own experiences and engage with the historical event on a more personal level.<sup>243</sup>

Milan's and Daria's interviews reveal their highly emotional and intimate experiences during the *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* that also emerge in daily conversations. At the same time, through these active experiences, respondents create their own meanings, threading their personal engagement with the memory of Srebrenica. Milan and Daria each negotiate their own *spheres of speakability*: while Milan describes a gradual shift towards discomfort, Daria reflects on remembering trauma within a welcoming environment, mirroring Dekel's vision of memory spaces as personal engagement rather than passive commemoration.

In terms of the wider reception and general understanding of the performances, respondents provided different opinions. There were doubts about the universal understanding of 8372. For example, Mara thinks that researchers interested in such topics (as she and Milica, but

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<sup>243</sup> Again, I thank my reviewer Daniele Salerno for the idea of applying these concepts here.

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also Igor and Daria) may have more context; however, it seems that 8372 was understandable enough for the general audience. Milica remembers that besides her and Mara's academic engagement, deep personal resonance, curiosity, and casual discussions also took place. In addition, Mara points out the emotional and experiential impact that 8372 may provide: "This performance was also producing special kind of atmosphere, feeling and maybe this would be also just fine to experience this." Nevertheless, Mara remembers Zajc's story about the unexpected encounters of denial during 8372.<sup>244</sup> Mara also comments on online memory activism and claims that her Slovene friends or friends of Bosnian heritage appear pretty visible during the Srebrenica commemoration time on social media: "Usually they... I remember most[ly]. They were posting some kind of white bandage." Here, Mara mixes two different but similar actions to gain visibility—the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide with the White Ribbon Day, commemorating the ethnic cleansing and forced expulsion from the Prijedor area. Finally, Mara has an impression that there are many Srebrenica commemorations in the US, but she does not remember anything specific in Slovenia. Indeed, Milica, Jana and Vesna commented on a particular Slovenian detachment or emotional distance from Srebrenica, Bosnia and the trauma of the Yugoslav wars:

I think that many people in Slovenia. Have this attitude [...] not just attitude, but also perception. That war in Bosnia [...], or Syria, or Ukraine, [...] that [...] is horrible, but it's not really our problem or something we need to deal with or it's very detached from our actual lives and I think it's misplaced in many ways. First. Events that happened in Slovenia in '91, in many ways, [...] exaggerated events that happened later on in Bosnia. [...] [T]hat is one issue, the other one is that actually there is much more, cultural and demographic, exchange between Slovenia and Bosnia, Serbia, [...] people are moving, money is moving, inheritance is moving. Cultural: [...] songs, films, all of these things are moving around. [...] and this idea that there is Slovenia and then there is Bosnia and these are two detached entities is very problematic and this is something very much perpetuated by [...] Slovenian cultural self-perception, seeing themselves as white as central European, as non-Balkan or as like Slovenes lived in Slovenia. Well, no, actually 1/3 of the population is somehow related to the rest of Yugoslavia and Benjamin with his performance [...] he addressed precisely, his own personal issue be

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<sup>244</sup> "So, he said to us [...] that he had many unexpected encounters and one of these [...] unexpected encounters was a woman [...] that came, and in silence waited after everyone else went out, and then she read something like a manifesto [...] about Srebrenica. How it is not [a] genocide. She read it in front of him [...]. So this was something that [...] was like, the most striking experience for him." [Mara]

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with the [...] unwanted or, not unwanted, but just this the relationship is there whether you want it or you don't want it. It's there and he was reflecting upon it. While I think for many people in Slovenia, they think that, [...] it somehow completely detached from their lives, even when it's not. [Milica]

I feel like it's very commonly like, 'this was a horrible thing that happened.' And I mean, we're not trying to forget it. But maybe we are sometimes trying to move past it. I mean, it's not like it had a direct influence on us. But it is kind of present, I mean because we only had like a 10-day long war, you know, and they had this really horrible like. I don't know how many years it took, but it was really, really bloody and really, really like a genocide, you know? So yeah, we can't even imagine what it was like, I think, because here it's like [...] we like had the independence, [...] referendum, we decided to go out of Yugoslavia. We had a 10-day war. I mean there were like victims but still [...], it wasn't such a big deal. Whereas this part of Yugoslavia [...] had really strong consequences because of this [...]. [Jana]

I think we as Slovenians are quite remote from [...] those happenings. Because we technically were a part of Yugoslavia. But when Slovenia, in 1991, became an independent country. The war lasted for 10 days, Croatia and Bosnia, and [...] Kosovo, they're still going at it. And it's been, what, 20 years? We really got lucky in that sense. [...] We don't have as much national, generational trauma as other countries have. Because [...] we've been a part of Austria for the longest time. So, we've been Germanised. We've been a part of Italy, so italicised. We don't have a strong connection, but we have enough connection that [...] we can speak about Srebrenica, in a way that isn't insensitive. As [...] an American speaking about would be and I also think we're just remote enough that it's not an event that hurts us personally. [Vesna]

These reflections reveal Slovenia's position in self-detachment from the Srebrenica genocide.

Milica's, Jana's and Vesna's comments only confirm Slovene audience classification as *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019), discussed in Chapter 5 (see subsection 5.2.3).

Slovenians became implicated through the shared history and through Slovenia's role in navigating its position during the dissolution of Yugoslavia while the violence escalated in other parts of the country. As Vesna highlights, Slovenia occupies a unique position regarding the Srebrenica genocide: while Slovenes may not be directly connected to the tragedy, their geographical and cultural proximity allows them to empathise while maintaining a certain distance.

Simultaneously, Vesna points out Slovenia's unresolved history of mass graves from the end of the Second World War, when Tito's regime eliminated political opponents but also killed many civilians. On one hand, Slovenia has its own unresolved historical issues, according to

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her. On the other hand, Vesna emphasises Slovenia's advantage in addressing the Srebrenica genocide due to its (post-)Yugoslav ties and shared history with Bosnia. This connection allows Slovenia to relate deeply to the tragedy yet maintain a healthy distance. Vesna's perspective may explain the appearance of 8372 in Slovenia, which is sensitive, inclusive, and avoids victimisation.

8372/IV attendees had various insights about the audience. Diana, Igor and Lina emphasise the sincere willingness of the audience to take part in the performance, taking a seat at the table as soon as it is empty. Nevertheless, Elena noticed the participants' fatigue and the urge to grind the beans to finish faster and leave the stuffy auditorium. She also recalls that the majority left the performance due to a loss of interest and lack of engagement. In contrast to other shows, Lina and Elena did not notice a desire among the group to delve deeper into 8372/IV after the show. Thus, as Lina concludes, the audience got ambiguous impressions.

Igor believes that the Osijek audience more or less understood the concept because they got the introduction, and Zajc's minimalist approach allowed them to engage freely. So, according to Igor and Ewan, 8372/IV goals were achieved. Additionally, Igor divides the audience into generations and describes their reactions to 8372/IV. According to him, members of the Baby Boomer generation were deeply affected by 8372/IV. His 60-year-old colleague, who was around 30 when the Srebrenica genocide occurred, associated the act of crushing beans with crushing bones. Additionally, when some beans accidentally fell to the ground, she interpreted it as symbolizing either an escape from the genocide or death. This reaction demonstrates how deeply personal and emotional the performance was for her, reflecting how even those not directly affected by the tragedy can still be profoundly moved by its representation. Igor, who belongs to Generation X, said he was more interested in the concept of performance, but he also emphasised his professional deformation as a theatre critic. Finally, Igor comments on Generation Z, saying they do not think about Srebrenica due

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to a lack of historical knowledge and interest. For people who were born in Yugoslavia, the

“war in Croatia and one in war in Bosnia is like similar war,” says Igor:

Just here started earlier and [...] finished earlier and in Bosnia was finished later and. It was much worse, but we all knew that it will be much, much, much worse because [...] politically situation was much complicated and still is. So, I don't think that they [students] connected it, for example with Vukovar or something like that, because [...] what is Srebrenica to Bosnian *rat* [war], Vukovar is to Croatian *rat* [war]. [Igor]

Paradoxically, Ewan from Scotland assumes that people from the region could relate to the 8372/IV better due to geographical closeness and history. However, the nation-states on the former territory of Yugoslavia still struggle with the denial of war crimes (Gordy 2013) and the cultivation of nationalistic narratives in public spaces (Subotić 2019; Đureinović 2020) and school curricula (Ognjenović and Jozelić 2020). Meanwhile, Ewan remembers learning something about the *Balkan genocide* at school and having limited knowledge about it; therefore, he tried to self-educate about the topic before writing a short piece about 8372/IV. Similarly, Lithuanian respondents recall learning in high school that the Srebrenica genocide took place but did not have a broader context.

Regarding *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, Daria believes its general reception was optimistic: “I had the impression that it was received positively. Nobody felt antagonised. Nobody rolled their eyes. Everyone was very respectful and waited [...] till the end. Everyone was also very respectful of his concept, so when he didn't want to give any more information, people were like, ‘OK’, so it felt like [...] it fell on fertile ground.” Petra, Milan, and Vesna think that Zajc made a clear statement and that his message was well-delivered. However, Vesna, Teja, and Jure note that everyone has different associations due to their background and mental state, and that is how good performance works, according to Vesna and Jure. “I think it is really up to the person to experience it in a way they want to and because it is such a personal thing [...], I think it's inherently about death. And [...] every person is going to think about somebody else when we think about that. I know I did because [...], we all have

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some experiences in that department, sadly,” reflects Vesna. She highlights that *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* created an opportunity to relate on a very personal level to the pain experienced by the families of genocide victims. In her case, she reflected on the prolonged suffering of her dying grandfather, contrasting it with the lives taken too soon in Srebrenica. This sense of imbalance—between lives ended prematurely and those extended against their will—made the experience deeply personal for her. Death, therefore, became a universal theme that audiences could relate to. Additionally, Milan connects to the Slovenian context and generational trauma and uses an interesting concept of *Balkan genocide* (as did Ewan):

I think the topics are in a way [...] universal, [...] especially the parts, [...] where we killed the poor man and [...] the eyes on the plates and nobody notices those eyes until Beni points them out to us. And [...] even if you don't pin this whole thing, this whole feelings on the *Balkan genocide*, which [...] I'm at no liberty to speak of [...] as a Slovenian, I don't personally feel as much of a generational trauma as probably some of my some of my peers in the Balkan countries do. [...] I think we still feel it, but I don't feel entitled to speak on it. But yeah, [...] even though if you don't pin the whole thing on that, [...] like the universal topic of everyone who watches on a death is guilty. I think that is the thing that would come across [...] hypothetically. [Milan]

Despite the comments on positive reception, Žan remembers that most of the participants in his take were unwilling to cooperate: “I guess everyone was more on the shy [...] side. We were all unwilling to cooperate. [...] Sometimes, if you have a room full of shy people, everyone is just quiet.” Petra remarks that it was easy to follow the performance because she knew about 8372. Otherwise, it might have been different. Finally, Nina felt disappointed that there was no effort on the part of the audience to delve deeper into the subject of the Srebrenica genocide, even though she tried to steer the conversation in that direction.

Regarding *multi-directionality*, Žan, Lina and Vesna had some thoughts on the war in Ukraine while watching Zajc's performances. Also, Vesna related the Bosnian context of the 1990s with the context of the Second World War and told a survival story of his grandpa and the complex war choices. Similarly, Diana discussed the unhealed wounds of war across generations and cultures, focusing on Eastern Europe. She also reflected on whether Zajc's

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performance would ring a bell in Lithuania. Vesna commented on selective memory and the moral ambiguities of war and intervention while referring to the NATO bombing of Belgrade and the film *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022) based on Erich Maria Remarque's book. Finally, prompted by my question, Igor, Lina, and Diana discussed concepts such as genocide and massacre, concluding that in Slovenian and Lithuanian, massacre [*pokol* and *žudynės*] sounds more brutal and graver than genocide. So, Zajc's performances about Srebrenica definitely evoke thoughts about different conflicts, consequences, and responsibilities.

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The three tables below summarise the most pronounced meanings encoded by artists and decoded/interpreted by the audience for each initiative. These meanings were derived inductively, based on data from conducted interviews and, in some cases, other online sources (such as social media posts, news articles, etc.) regarding the artists' intentions. Meanings that closely match the artists' intentions are highlighted. Additional meanings created by both the artists and the audience are presented in plain text. Audience interpretations that differ from, or strongly contradict, the artists' intentions are italicised.

As the meanings related to coffee are not fully addressed in this chapter, they are explored in the following (Chapter 8).

While these tables present only a summary of the data, Annexes 16–19 provide an opportunity to look at the complete picture of the data collected and categorised.

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### ŠTO TE NEMA Encoded and Decoded/Interpreted Meanings

	Encoded meanings	Decoded/interpreted meanings
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Srebrenica genocide</b>	<b>Srebrenica genocide</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and their families</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and their families</b> <i>To the victims of the Bosnian War</i>
<b>Language/Character</b>	<b>Inclusive</b> Focusing on <b>individual deaths</b> Fostering <b>empathy</b> Creating <b>emotional</b> connection <b>Humanising</b> <b>Respective towards the victims</b> Gender-sensitive No space for genocide denial Depicting the absence of the victims Communicating pain and loss	Non-political, <b>inclusive</b> and organic <b>Individualising</b> : special care to each cup/victim Personal and <b>empathetic</b> engagement <b>Emotional</b> through song and ceremony <b>Humanising</b> <b>Respective towards the victims</b> Engaging through sensory experience Compelling and visual Gentle but powerful Effective
<b>Main objectives</b>	<b>Commemorate the Srebrenica genocide and honour the victims</b> <b>Raise genocide awareness and prevent atrocities</b> <b>Inform</b> the audience Give hope and agency Call for justice and accountability Promote <b>peace</b> <b>Community building</b> Inspire <b>Fight genocide denial</b> and injustice Gain the <b>approval of the Women of Srebrenica</b> (and other <b>survivors</b> ) to ensure the work's integrity Address present-day concerns <b>Remind the human cost of violent conflict</b> and unredeemed guilt of the international community Foster inclusion	<b>Commemorate the Srebrenica genocide and honour the victims</b> <b>Raise genocide awareness and prevention</b> Track attention and send a powerful message <b>Share information</b> and achieve global reach Keep collective memory alive <b>Call for justice and accountability</b> Promote <b>peace</b> <b>Community building</b> Humanise the victims Educate on genocide, <b>addressing denial</b> <b>Provide (families of) survivors' perspective</b> Create a shared understanding of mass atrocities through cultural expression Share information and achieve global reach <b>Remind</b> and depict <b>the human cost of violent conflict</b> Represent the un/under-represented Bosnian community Invoke the presence of victims by depicting their absence
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Community building</b> Instigating <b>prevention</b> and awareness Empowering: <b>giving inspiration and hope</b> <b>Emotional impact</b> <b>Empathetic impact</b> <b>Fighting genocide denial</b> Opening difficult subject matters Fostering inclusion Engaging with different audiences Healing	<b>Connecting</b> <b>Preventive impact</b> <b>Inspirational and hopeful</b> <b>Humanizing impact</b> <b>Emotional impact</b> <b>Empathetic impact</b> <b>Fight genocide denial</b> Educational impact Unforgettable experience
<b>Meanings of coffee in ŠTO TE NEMA</b>	Inspired by the <b>wives</b> of the Srebrenica genocide victims <b>who no longer have someone to drink coffee with</b> <b>Rooted coffee drinking tradition in BiH</b> <b>Everyday routine element</b> <b>Connector/unifying element</b> <b>Social moment and its absence</b> Medium	The <b>wives</b> of the victims <b>no longer have someone to drink coffee with</b> Recognisable and <b>relatable</b> symbol in BiH and the Balkans <b>Integral to Bosnian culture</b> Unique but simple way to talk about the <b>absence</b> and pain <b>Essential part of daily life/Daily life essential</b> Symbol of hospitality and <b>human connection</b> <b>Sense of community/togetherness</b> Excuse for socialising/social gesture



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		<b>Family ritual</b> Powerful piece of imagery Precious ritual during the war
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### *My Thousand Year Old Land* Encoded and Decoded/Interpreted Meanings

	Encoded meanings	Decoded/interpreted meanings
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Srebrenica genocide</b> <b>Bosnian War</b> and other war crimes against the Bosniaks	<b>Srebrenica genocide</b> <b>Bosnian War</b> atrocities <i>Bosnian genocide</i> <i>Bosnian identity</i>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide</b> and the Bosniak victims of <b>Bosnian war</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide</b> To the victims of the <b>Bosnian War</b>
<b>Language/Character</b>	Not re-victimizing the victims Sensitivity <b>Humanising</b> <b>Gender-sensitive</b> Focusing on individual deaths Evoking senses Psychotherapeutic Unique way of <b>directing</b> <b>Relatable</b> through ordinary things <b>Humour</b> Using poetry, songs and local traditions Puppetry and object theatre Vibrant Expressing gratitude Universal	Emotional and effective due to survivors' testimonies Moving and <b>humanising</b> <b>Gender-sensitive</b> Effective and powerful Discomforting yet worthwhile Giving the voice to Bosnians Effective <b>directing</b> and scenography <b>Relatable</b> Thought-provoking Wryly <b>humorous</b> Innovative presentation of real events High standard acting Usage of Bosnian language
<b>Main objectives</b>	<b>Remember and honour</b> individual victims <b>Raise awareness</b> and prevent atrocities Make the world a better place <b>Women's solidarity</b> <b>Give the voice to Bosnians</b> Appropriately <b>represent victims</b> <b>Tell the stories of the oppressed/survivors</b> of mass violence <b>Present facts</b> <b>Inform</b> uninformed audiences Recognise the importance of addressing <b>present-day concerns</b> and <b>educate</b> Evoke empathy with the suffering <b>Justice, truth and hope</b> Fighting against evil, hatred, injustice and xenophobia Create storytelling space Self-realisation Acknowledge crimes for a better future Carry the inherited burden of responsibility Fight stereotypes about Islam and introduce Islam in a relatable way Fight Islamophobia Pay attention to children's war experience	<b>Remember</b> the victims and survivors <b>Raise awareness</b> that conflict can happen anywhere (despite past peace) Highlight the strength and resilience <b>of women</b> <b>Tell the story of Bosnian people</b> <b>Humanise the victims</b> Explain the genocide <b>from the survivors' point of view</b> <b>Factual storytelling</b> <b>Bring deeper understanding</b> Portray human fragility and vulnerability <b>Educate</b> Foster <b>empathy</b> by finding common ground Search for <b>truth, justice and hope</b> Remind the unredeemed guilt of the international community Depict dehumanisation and loss of civilisation Explore disillusionment and historical awareness Show the importance of dialogue and memory Emphasise healing through sharing Show resilience and the beauty of life Embrace resilience and advocacy Illustrate the effects of genocide and war Show the impact of violence on cultural heritage <i>Cultural preservation of traditions and identity</i>
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Informing</b> about mass atrocities Instigating prevention and <b>awareness</b> Empowering Creating emotional connection	<b>Informing</b> foreign audiences about the Bosnian War and its consequences <b>Informing</b> about the consequences of war and fostering empathy

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	Fostering inclusion Engaging with different audiences Evoking profound <b>feelings</b> and authenticity <b>Pleasant vibes and enjoyment</b> <b>Humanising</b> Communicating pain and empathy Fighting trauma Transferring experienced (positive and negative) feelings in BiH	<b>Awareness</b> of peace and gratitude <b>Educational</b> and empathetic impact <b>Emotional</b> and intellectual impact Both <b>entertaining</b> and severe/ <b>educating</b> <b>Humanising</b> Understanding the significance of remembrance and accountability Effective learning from testimonies Lasting impression <i>Short-lived/limited impact due to lack of emotional depth</i>
<b>Meanings of coffee in MTYOL</b>	One of the <b>locally rooted Bosnian traditions</b> <b>Bosnian identity</b> <b>Ordinary things and everyday routine element</b> <b>Neighborhood</b> <b>Caring for each other</b> <b>Enjoyment</b> <b>Connector/unifying element</b> Slow drink Therapy and <b>quality time</b> Tea as <b>equivalent</b> to coffee in the UK Medium Way to talk about inhumanity	Common <b>Bosnian ritual</b> <b>Association with Bosnia</b> High <b>cultural significance</b> <b>Precious ritual</b> More than a drink: sharing and <b>caring, being in the community</b> <b>Enjoyment</b> <b>Unifying/universal</b> symbol of hospitality, <b>everyday life and human connection</b> <b>Quality time</b> <b>Relatable cultural connection</b> Releasing the tension Ottoman heritage: surprise at the distinction created between Bosnian and Turkish coffee Coffee is everything <i>Lack of consideration for coffee</i>

### 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 and 8372/IV Encoded and Decoded/Interpreted Meanings

	Encoded meanings	Decoded/interpreted meanings		
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Srebrenica genocide/massacre</b>	<b>Srebrenica genocide/massacre</b> <i>Balkan genocide</i> <i>Rwanda genocide</i> <i>Latin American coffee, slavery and colonialism</i>		
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide/massacre</b>	<b>To the victims of the Srebrenica genocide/massacre</b>		
		<b>8372</b>	<b><i>Stories of Coffee Grounds</i>/8372:</b>	<b>8372/IV</b>
<b>Language/Character</b>	<b>Not trying to moralise</b> Being <b>respectful</b> towards the victims Reminder of the privileges we have during the peacetime <b>Evoking senses</b> Gender-sensitive Not faking Bosnian culture <b>Inclusive and engaging</b>	<b>Opening a thoughtful debate without simplistic politicisation</b> <b>Balanced and respectful</b> approach Pleasant and accepting <b>Personal and nonjudgmental</b> exploration of the Srebrenica genocide <b>Actual participatory performance</b> Physical <b>engagement</b>	Great atmosphere and <b>sensorial experience</b> <b>Immersive storytelling through participant engagement</b> Power of art in addressing Srebrenica genocide Effective piece <b>Subtle and expansive way to talk about Srebrenica</b>	Inspiring <b>Authenticity</b> and innovative engagement with the audience Unique ability to <b>engage participants</b> on multiple levels Courage to open a <b>complex topic</b> and to improvise <b>Sensorial experience</b> Personal Contemporary puppetry <b>Subtle way to present the issue and set the tone for the performance</b>

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		Intense and unique Detailed		
<b>Main objectives</b>	<b>Remind about the Srebrenica genocide/massacre</b> <b>Recognizing the importance of addressing present-day concerns</b> Acknowledging failure to prevent past crimes for a better future <b>Redemption of inherent responsibility</b> <b>Increase the audience's sense of guilt/ implication in the crime</b> Searching for ways to be sustainable/ not create waste	<b>Commemoration</b> <b>Honouring the Srebrenica genocide and its victims</b> <b>Raising awareness</b> Creating a new collective memory around experiences overlooked in everyday life <b>Atonement for relatives</b>	Conveying loss and pain of missing everyday moments with people who are no longer with us due to genocide and not only/ <b>Making Srebrenica relatable</b> Highlighting memory and <b>commemoration</b> in everyday practices Creating tangible memory through <b>sensory experience</b> <b>Rejection of violence</b> <b>Revealing ignorance and powerlessness</b> Portraying the ease of forgetting tragedies Remember and conclude 8372 performance and representing links to BiH <i>Promoting the practice of reading from coffee grounds</i> <i>Unclear purpose</i>	<b>Commemoration</b> <b>Honouring the victims of the genocide/</b> Paying tribute to lost memories <b>Personal redemption in public</b> <b>Raising awareness to encourage collective reflection and responsibility</b> Collectivity and the search for meaning in it Intentionally a companion piece to ŠTO TE NEMA but strong on its own <b>Reflecting on being on the wrong side of history</b> <b>Washing away family guilt</b> <i>Focus on the labour act and determination to carry out a task under any conditions</i> <i>Unclear due to a lack of resonance</i>
<b>Impact</b>	Instigating <b>prevention</b> <b>Raising awareness about personal position/ implication</b> Empowering Fighting genocide denial <b>Engaging</b> with different audiences <b>Informing</b> Making audience <b>uncomfortable</b> Getting personal and intimate <b>Creating emotional connection</b> No interest in education	<b>Commemorating</b> Memorability of 8372 <b>Emotional and experiential impact</b> rather than educational Push to learn and reflect more <b>Provoking thought</b> Metaphoric impact of meaningless death Exploring dark theme	<b>Thought-provoking/reflection</b> on avoidance <b>Emotional and experiential impact rather than educational</b> <b>Raising awareness</b> about the number of victims and the <b>genocide</b> <b>Reminder about Srebrenica and ongoing atrocities</b> Exploratory impact without accusation Relaxed and non-confrontational talk about Srebrenica <b>Awoken self-reflection on role and attitude</b> <i>Great idea but poor realisation</i>	<b>Collective reflection on war</b> Reflection on <b>collective responsibility</b> <b>Emotional</b> atmosphere 8372's insertion into a pre-existing landscape of Srebrenica memory through coffee Enjoyment of the purity of the sound Art impact on the audience Tense atmosphere and sensorial experience left an impression
<b>Meanings of coffee in 8372, Stories of Coffee Grounds/</b>	<b>Inspired by the story of the widow, missing her husband most over coffee</b>	<b>Built on a quote about missing coffee with the husband</b> <b>Inspired by ŠTO TE NEMA</b> <b>Unifying/universal symbol in the region</b> Enrooted in Balkan culture and <b>everyday life</b> <b>Everyday essential</b> Meaningful cultural ritual with a primary <b>social role/event</b>		

## Chapter 7: Audience Perception of Art Initiatives: Positive and Negative Critique, Impact, Public Engagement and Participation

8372 and 8372/IV	<p>Reference to ŠTO TE NEMA</p> <p>Ordinary</p> <p>Rooted tradition in BiH/Balkans</p> <p>Everyday routine element</p> <p>Multiple layers</p> <p>Social moment and its absence</p> <p>Sharing moments together</p>	<p>Symbol of deep connection with someone/quality time</p> <p>Shared ritual of connection and intimacy</p> <p>Symbol of endurance and process/Versatility of coffee</p> <p>Immediate association with BiH: pleasure and then contrasts with the genocide</p> <p>Juxtaposition of ordinary and tragic</p> <p>Created great atmosphere and experience: powerful sensor tool</p> <p>Effective tool for comforting the audience and then disturbing</p> <p>Coffee brings people together and divides them simultaneously</p> <p>Relating to Slovenian literature</p> <p>Connecting family, memory/ies and tradition</p> <p>Relatable experience: a tool to bring the audience closer to the performance as they are familiar with the coffee smell and taste</p> <p>Turkish coffee—a special type</p> <p>Powerful prop for storytelling</p> <p>Coffee as a tool and as an object, as an engaging material, practical choice</p> <p><i>Reversal energizing effect: Zajc lost energy while graining coffee</i></p> <p><i>Associations with colonialism</i></p> <p><i>Rwanda genocide</i></p> <p><i>Hard to connect coffee with Srebrenica</i></p> <p><i>Coffee ritual is a waste of time</i></p> <p><i>Unawareness of coffee's cultural significance</i></p>
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## **8 Interpreting Genocide Through Coffee: Audience Reactions to the Artists' Use of Coffee as a Medium for Addressing Genocide**

This chapter explores the audience's perspectives on using coffee to discuss the Srebrenica genocide. In particular, it examines how respondents felt about the artists' choice of using coffee to talk about the genocide, their personal connections to coffee, what coffee represents in different contexts, and how coffee-drinking rituals compare to other beverage rituals, such as tea traditions in England and Russia. The chapter also presents respondents' opinions on how they believe the general audience perceived the use of coffee in this context. Due to space constraints, including all the interesting quotations was impossible, but the reader may find them in Annexes [17](#), [18](#) and [19](#).

### ***8.1 Audience Reactions to the Use of Coffee in Art Initiatives***

#### **8.1.1 Audience Reactions to the Use of Coffee in ŠTO TE NEMA**

All ŠTO TE NEMA's respondents were Bosnians, so they all found the employment of coffee in art very meaningful. They identified coffee as a recognisable and relatable symbol in the region, an integral part of Bosnian culture<sup>245</sup> and everyday life.<sup>246</sup> For many respondents, coffee meant much more than a drink: an excuse for socialising, a social

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<sup>245</sup> "Well, coffee is part of Bosnia. [...] In Bosnia, everything starts and ends with coffee. That is the meaning of the project." [Fatima] / "In Bosnia, coffee is something basic, so nothing can be done without coffee." [Nadira]

<sup>246</sup> "[...] [W]e are people who don't know how to function without coffee." [Lara]

## Chapter 8: Interpreting Genocide Through Coffee: Audience Reactions to the Artists' Use of Coffee as a Medium for Addressing Genocide

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gesture,<sup>247</sup> symbolising hospitality and human connection,<sup>248</sup> which plays a massive role in

BiH. Naturally, the respondents could significantly relate to ŠTO TE NEMA's idea:

I was amazed by the initiative for many years. I loved it. It was because [...] I'm a Bosnian and I wholeheartedly understand the point and [...] the story because I can reflect and I can relate [...] to that completely. [...] So I have th[is] uncle that died that I used [...] to drink, have coffee with [...] him and my mother and my brother. That ritual of drinking coffee with someone you love and really often when I have this coffee with my mother, [...] I really often think about it, how I would love him to be there. So, I understand that completely. Understand how it feels missing to having coffee with someone even when I'm not with my family, close family for a long time. [...] [H]ow it's important [...] for us in BiH and in this region [...]. [Hana]

[...] I think it's so part of ingrained in our culture and ritualistic. But we were like 'ohh yeah, coffee, of course,' like 'not drinking it with your family. What?' Like 'that's so sad.' [...] I think [...] that's the reaction and that's exactly what Aida was going for, she knows that these women who have lost someone. [...] I mean every family that's lost someone you don't have that person to drink coffee with. We all know what coffee means in our culture and to not be able to drink it with the people you love. And that's [...] [r]eally sad [...] and it is a big loss. [...] I know that was that's behind the story of why she started ŠTO TE NEMA because we've [...] talked about that before. So, I think people [...] from Bosnia get it. But I think [...] inviting others to understand it was probably a challenge, but I think she did well with [...] travelling with the project. I think [...] people got it [...]. [Adna]

But for us, coffee is not just. How it is for Americans like you're just [...] jug it down so that you can be awake or Italians. It's like have *espresso* from your feet and like just so that you can be awake. For us, [...] it's really an excuse to connect with whoever it is you're having coffee with. So, whether it's a one-on-one or community and we have them multiple times a day. [...] It's not about caffeine [...]. I mean, sure, everybody's addicted at this point. So, the first one probably is of the day, but [t]hat's not the main purpose of having coffee [...]. [It] is really about community and family and connection, and so you pouring that cup is you participating in the communal experience of that, of ŠTO TE NEMA. [Esma]

Esma, Adna and Hana emphasise coffee's deep cultural significance in BiH, not merely as a beverage but as a ritual of connection and community. Also, all three of them are well-

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<sup>247</sup> "It's not about coffee itself; it's a social gesture. You meet for a coffee." [Mira] / "[...] drinking coffee in Bosnia is a really big thing [...]. But it's not about drinking coffee. It's about people gathering, talking to each other. Sometimes you don't even get to drink the actual coffee. It's about people telling their stories, how your day went by because it's more of like a ritual [...]. And because in one day you have your morning coffee, you have your afternoon coffee, you have your evening coffee. And then it's like this couple of minutes of silence when you gather around and then you're just asking each other how your day went by." [Šejla] / "Coffee is an excuse for us to talk, to socialise. [...] It also means that we sit down, rest, talk, laugh, and socialise." [Lara]

<sup>248</sup> "It's not just solely spending time with someone, it's... Sharing the best and the worst moments of your life by drinking coffee [...]." [Hana]

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informed about the project: Adna and Esma are friends of Šehović, and Hana has been interested in the project for a long time, as she says. Therefore, they primarily connect ŠTO TE NEMA with not having an opportunity to drink coffee with a dear person and community or family bond. Their interpretations align with the already discussed (see subsection 4.2.1) concepts of *stored* and *functional* cultural memories (Assmann and Assmann 1994), where coffee is an embedded/*stored* tradition passed down through generations and a *functional*, re-semanticised device that transmits the feeling of loss and addressed the genocide interactively and engagingly. Although the dimension used by the artist is *functional*, it is clearly based on *stored* memory of the Bosnian coffee ritual. Understanding the project's essence does not require a profound explanation for someone from this cultural background—it resonates naturally. This is evident with Fatima, who, despite not participating in ŠTO TE NEMA, relates strongly to Bosnian culture in her interpretation and explains interesting nuances of Bosnian coffee drinking that none of the other respondents discussed:

In Bosnia, we have coffee. I always tell my guests this when they come here, when we're drinking coffee [...]. We sit, and the first coffee is called *Dočekuša* (*Welcome Coffee*). *Doček* means welcome. And the first coffee in Bosnia is called *Dočekuša*. After that, more coffees are drunk. One, two, five, six, seven. And we talk. *Priča* means conversation. So, starting from the second coffee onward, those coffees are what we call *Razgovoruše* (*Conversation Coffees*). *Razgovoruša* means *Dočekuša*, and then *Razgovoruše*—there are more of them, in plural form. And at the end, when the conversation is over, when it is time to leave, then there is the last coffee, *Sikteruša* (*Get-out Coffee*). So, there is one at the beginning, one at the end, and in between, there could be one, two, five, or seven. And that is precisely what coffee means in Bosnia. In Bosnia, everything starts and ends with coffee. That is the significance of this project.  
[Fatima]

Fatima explains the Bosnian coffee ritual in great detail and structures it by highlighting its parts: beginning, progress and end. Simultaneously, Fatima adds another essential layer to her interpretation. While referring to the ŠTO TE NEMA's title (*Why are you not here?/Where have you been?*), she connects the project to the call for justice and accountability: "Say where they [the victims] are. [...] I always hope some people have information about graves that have not yet been discovered. Maybe this constant, open call means, 'Come on, have a

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conscience, say something if nothing else. They didn't have the right to live here, but let them at least have the right to a proper burial.' That is it." For Fatima, ŠTO TE NEMA carries not only the weight of remembrance but also a moral and legal urgency, encouraging perpetrators and bystanders to come forward with information about the hidden mass graves.

Bosnian respondents agree that using coffee effectively represents human loss and the pain of the victims' families. As Velma highlights, the absence of loved ones is most felt in once-shared rituals, such as coffee drinking. So, preparing a cup of coffee for someone who passed away (was murdered in this case) encapsulates the emotional weight of loss, making that feeling tangible, adds Hana. Thus, Jasmina, Velma and Hana find Šehović's way unique, but at the same time, simple, relatable and understandable:

I think, uh, the coffee represents [...] spending time with your family, talking, sharing like especially those morning coffees. And I think Aida used the coffee in a great way to show... Like represent the culture and the coffee for me in that project represents the connection between families and living. The person who was left behind and the people who unfortunately died and how lonely the feeling of mother is that she has to wake up alone and drink her coffee alone without no family members. So, I think coffee was great for presentation [...] of their pain and their loneliness and how they feel, how the Mothers feel. So, I think coffee was one unique way to represent that. [Velma]

So, for me, I completely understood and it there [...] wasn't a better way to communicate the feel of missing someone so dear to your heart, other by this symbolic[s] of [...] making coffee for that missing person [...]. [Hana]

It was amazing and it was so unique [...], but it's so simple [...]. I really like [...] when she did that in other cities, when she invites people to come over and fill the [...] cups. So [...] if they don't know about what [...] that installation is about, she starts talking with them. I kind of like that part of being [...] social and... the importance of sharing the story about the [...] place, about the victims, about the genocide. And to other people in other cities. And I think that. That kind of should be also spread. In [...] smaller communities in Bosnia. Because I think that *oral history* is really important and that, that is kind of the best way to learn about the past. [Jasmina]

Jasmina even attributes such efforts to raise awareness about the genocide to *oral history*.

Although ŠTO TE NEMA was built on the support of the *Women of Srebrenica* and their stories of loss, it can hardly be described as an oral history project. Oral history primarily involves "recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the



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personal experiences and opinions of the speaker” (University of Leicester 2020). So, oral history stands for a systematic method of collecting and recording personal memories. In contrast, Jasmina refers more to the process of engaging different communities, encouraging them to interact with the artwork and share stories about the genocide with the uninformed publics, employing the act of filling the cups and talking about the genocide to promote shared memory and awareness. Thus, rather than fitting the oral history framework, Jasmina emphasises participatory engagement and storytelling, leaning towards what might be called *community/participatory storytelling*. N’Deane Helajzen (2024), a photographer trained in anthropology, defines such storytelling as *contributory* or *inclusive storytelling*, which “focuses on narratives that are rooted in the experiences and perspectives of a community.” According to Helajzen, community storytelling empowers the community and allows them to control the narrative process, ensuring that stories are told *by* the community rather than *about* the community. However, as mentioned previously, ŠTO TE NEMA’s founder, Aida Šehović, has no direct connection to the genocide, nor do most of her volunteers. On the other hand, ŠTO TE NEMA relied on Bosnian diaspora communities, who may not always have a direct link to the Srebrenica genocide, but could share the stories of forced displacement, violence and the Bosnian war. In this case, they represent a wider Bosnian community abroad. Helajzen directly links storytelling to co-creation, which becomes a collaborative process between the community (victims and survivors of Srebrenica) and the storytellers (Šehović and her team of volunteers approaching the audience). Again, victims and survivors rarely attended ŠTO TE NEMA, except for the last iteration in 2020. However, Helajzen (2024) also argues that “true co-creation is not merely about amplifying the voices of community members but about creating stories together.” As mentioned above, volunteers do indeed interweave genocide stories with their own traumatic experiences and then encourage the audience to relate this to their personal losses, so the process is indeed co-creative.

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Perhaps an even better concept to apply in this context would be *dialogic memory* (Assmann 2015). Aleida Assmann argues that memory works more dialogically than one-way, and it can work both as a medium for fostering understanding and reconciliation or inflaming conflict and revenge. However, she tends to focus on the first, more positive kind of memory. Assmann's dialogic memory offers a more pluralistic, interactive form where multiple voices and experiences are recognised and integrated rather than a monologic memory of a single hegemonic narrative. That is precisely what ŠTO TE NEMA aims for by bringing together perspectives on a shared legacy of violence and genocide. Additionally, ŠTO TE NEMA transcended national boundaries by travelling to various cities worldwide, bringing the memory of Srebrenica into new contexts and reaching *implicated subjects* (Rothberg 2019) by fostering a shared responsibility to remember the genocide. Such a transnational dimension resonates with Assmann's concept of dialogic memory that can operate on a broader scale, encouraging communities and remote nations to confront histories of violence together. Assmann also highlights the importance of memory, which communicates between the generations. ŠTO TE NEMA highly targets the younger generations, who did not experience mass atrocities, to engage them with the traumatic past and sustain the memory of the genocide for future generations. So, the project involves the intergenerational transmission of memory, where younger generations can learn from the first- or second-generation volunteer immigrants from Bosnia. Most importantly, the symbolic act of filling the cups allows participants, including those who have no connection to BiH, to connect with the memory of the victims. In this way, ŠTO TE NEMA facilitates a dialogue between the memory of the Srebrenica genocide and the wider world. To conclude, these concepts of participatory storytelling and dialogic memory may better encapsulate what Jasmina had in mind than *oral history*.

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Returning to the absence of loved ones in daily rituals such as drinking coffee, Esma notes an old Bosnian tradition of leaving an empty cup for the deceased. She explains the mourning tradition in BiH and relates it to the Bosnian Church:

[...] [W]e have this tradition that you set an empty coffee cup for somebody you might have lost in a family, and so that way they participate with you in your coffee rituals [...]. [W]hen a person is just passed or especially if it's like a husband and wife. So somebody [...] you had coffee with all the time and then [...] for whenever you think about that person, you set an empty cup for them and you [...] leave it empty. Sometimes you pour coffee in it [...]. So, you offer them coffee because [...] of our original religion that was in Bosnia was called *Bosnian Church* and it [...] was sort of paganistic in nature and I think some of those elements have survived even though we're [...] Islamised and most of it, [...] it still has a lot of this like spirits and you know connection to like what somebody what [...] Christians would call witchcraft. But it's not, [...] it's just about a connection with something other than you cannot see that isn't written in a book by a man. [Esma]

Esma also explains that she has a similar ritual with her brother, who passed away. The only difference is that they used to share a glass of whiskey rather than a cup of coffee: "We didn't really like the coffee, wasn't part of our ritual. [...] [W]hat was part of our ritual is whiskey like we both [...] like whiskey and so on his birthday and an anniversary of his passing. Like I will. Have a glass of our favourite whiskey and I ask other people who knew him to do the same thing. So [...] it's about sharing some food or drink that is associating you to that person." Although sharing a cup of coffee is perhaps the most common ritual in BiH, as many interviewees confirmed, other drinks may be substituted because the essence of such a ritual is sharing. "But I think [...]... That ritual of sitting down together to share some [...] whether it's coffee or juice, or matcha is something that is very significant to me and I think it's because I spent my childhood in that and sort of formative years in that this sort of sense of community. [...] I need to sit in the same space with you, and you can have your *espresso*, and I will have my matcha, and we will have a bonding connection," concludes Esma.

Esma's understanding of sharing a drink contradicts Paul Manning's (2012) ideas expressed in *Semiotics of Drink and Drinking*. While Manning argues that specific drinks (like coffee, tea, or whiskey) are embedded with culturally specific meanings and that drinking rituals

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communicate identity, including class, identity, social order, and social relationships, Esma suggests a more fluid interpretation of drinking. For Esma, the act of sharing the drink is more important than the substance. In fact, other interviewees revealed a similar approach. “[I]t’s not about the coffee, it’s about the people that you share that moment with. Because when I ask you, ‘oh, should we go for a cup of coffee,’ I’m not really inviting you to drink coffee, I mean, I’m inviting you to chat, to talk about life, to talk about what’s troubling you,” says Šejla. So, the type of drink is irrelevant here.

Šejla finds the idea of using coffee in ŠTO TE NEMA *innovative*. She recalls other traditional items used in other commemorative practises related to Srebrenica, such as *ćilimi* (traditional carpets) or *marama* (scarfs), which she also finds exciting. “But I think that Aida did a very good thing choosing and it was very *innovative* of her to choose especially a coffee cup,” she says. Also, Šejla claims that using the coffee cups is a touching and emotional choice: “I think the reason touched me so much and she told us that the reason why she started gathering this is because she talked with the Srebrenica mothers and asked them what do you miss most about your family members who passed away and she, they told her that [...] the [...] thing that they missed the most is the fact that they don’t have anybody to drink coffee with.” Šejla also remembers becoming emotional when she learned that the number of cups collected corresponded to the number of victims. Finally, she expresses her opinion on the audience, who did not relate to Šehović’s idea of employing coffee: “I think that [...] the ones who would say that it’s bad [...] are the people who didn’t really do much research about it, because [...] it wasn’t for the sake of the coffee [...] or the coffee cups. As I mentioned, it was symbolism. It represented each individual victim of the *war*.” Two things can be considered here. First, coffee no longer seems like a self-evident ritual that needs no explanation, as Šejla mentions research. Second, although ŠTO TE NEMA intends to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide, the interpretation here is that it

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commemorates the victims of the Bosnian war, which might be interpreted as a broader category as Srebrenica was one of the events that happened during the Bosnian War.

### 8.1.2 Audience Reactions to Coffee in *My Thousand Year Old Land's*

Most of the MTYOL's spectators highly admired the idea of embracing coffee on the stage. They understood that coffee means more than a drink and refers to sharing, caring, and being part of the community.<sup>249</sup> Thus, they found the idea of adapting the coffee in MTYOL clever, interesting, wonderful and relatable,<sup>250</sup> releasing the tension in the play about atrocities: "So, I really enjoyed the coffee scene, if you will. One 'cause it was quite light-hearted. And it was good to break up. You know, the overarching [...] dark tone," says Alex Haycock. Many respondents also identified coffee as a unifying and universal symbol of hospitality, everyday life and human connection:

I think the play made it abundantly clear that the coffee was what made the world go round to keep the [...] people grounded in what really matters: love and friendship and sharing and supporting each other. [Elizabeth] However little you have. [Margaret]

Because they drink coffee all over the world. It doesn't matter what your background is, [...] what your appearances, how you dress or what language you speak, you know, everybody drinks coffee. And it's a unifying theme. And it was in Bosnia, because all these different faiths sat around and drank coffee. And they got their special way of doing it. [Daniel]

I do not drink coffee but I can well imagine in Bosnian culture it being a family and communal activity, maintaining bonds within the community and keeping the culture of hospitality alive. [Albert]

To me it's about finding the traditions to hang your performances around—and coffee was as good a choice as any. I know that in Bosnia, as in many other cultures, coffee is an important way of life, of bringing people together, so the choice here to use it was good. [Thomas]

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<sup>249</sup> "So, I think I was quite pleased that they try to capture the meaning and time of coffees and not just as a drink but as sharing the time, sharing dreams, sharing things, joking, teasing, being part of the community." [Nora] / "...and it's like caring, isn't it?" [Margaret] / "They put the making of the ritual, the making of coffee at the centre of the society existed and probably is no different today." [Elizabeth]

<sup>250</sup> "I felt that it was a great motif to have throughout the play. My Lithuanian grandmother in law came to England during the second world war and SHE had a particular way of making coffee, plus she always drank her coffee with the spoon still in the cup. So that particular motif was poignant to me." [Sophia]

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Nevertheless, Henry noticed a highlighted difference between Bosnian and Turkish coffee in MTYOL that surprised him: “[...] [I]t’s perhaps a little surprising with coffee being such a Turkish or Ottoman thing, you’d think it would unite the areas, but actually there [in the play] it was shown as a difference: ‘We do our coffee quite different from Turkish,’ recalls Henry. Surprisingly, Zora from the region also distinguishes Bosnian coffee from Turkish: ‘I mean, they call it Turkish coffee, but I don’t think it’s Turkish. It’s Bosnian coffee, but it’s made in *džezva* and the rituals around how you make it.’” As discussed in Chapter 4 (see subsection 4.2.1), coffee can become a form of expressing a specific national identity, especially in a post–conflict condition where identity is constantly renegotiated. I will quote Ivanović, Vučetić, and Fotiadis (2019, 16) reflecting on post–Yugoslav space coffee culture(s) again because it is so relevant here: “Thus Turkish coffee started to acquire a national identity, no longer related to Turkey. Coffee, or rather *kahva/kava/kafa*,<sup>251</sup> thus became domestic, Bosnian, Serbian, brewed, Macedonian.” So, highlighting the Bosnianness of coffee relates to the nationalisation of coffee, owning it and looking for differences. I am curious why the play, which is not nationalistic in nature, emphasised this difference, rejecting the Ottoman heritage. However, it is possible that it was simply a form of humour used to ridicule coffee ownership, but it is difficult to ascertain with certainty. Despite these distinctions, David, Henry and Zora automatically related the Bosnian coffee ritual with the tea ritual in the UK:

Making coffee, talking as they share was a very important and familiar part of their culture. It was a habit and a ritual that transcended the atrocity. Yeah. It was very interesting. I didn’t realise that there was such a special meaning to drinking coffee beyond responding to thirst. We, English, make a cup of tea (which is getting cold as I talk to you). [David]

Embracing coffee? Well, bit of normal life, I suppose, and family traditions, how they’re important. Whether there’s a war or not, but especially if there’s a war. [...] Where it’s an area which is famous for coffee. [...] The Ottomans and everything in their neighbourhood. Coffee is... was... well, probably where coffee was introduced to Europe. And suppose... People know the term coffee is more or less the grunt of tea in Britain. [Henry]

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<sup>251</sup> Different spelling in Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian language(s).

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I have a feeling that maybe British audiences were able to kind of put that same connotation into arguing how, you know, there's a big argument in England: Do you make great English tea with pouring the milk first and then the tea or the tea first? And so there [...] are similarities in other cultures around the same notion of what is the proper way of doing something that's culturally very important and that is a food or a drink. [Zora]

Respondents see coffee as a daily ritual that transcends brutality and war. As the tea tradition is more widespread in the UK, they associate the coffee tradition in Bosnia with the tea tradition, which they see as closely related. Other respondents also drew the same or similar parallels, but only when I asked if they thought they were similar:

I think it came through beautifully. If you read the blurb about this play before coming, it said that everywhere is coffee. [...] [T]hey talked a lot about the coffee grinder. And the different ways the ritual, the ritual of making the coffee, which is very similar to the ritual of making tea in this country. [Elizabeth]

In England, particularly my grandmas, and aunties and uncles all come and have a cup of tea and cake. Don't miss the cake. Sometimes it had it in a tin for a long time, but they could give you a piece of cake; biscuits must be soggy. But yeah, it was more of a tea thing with our parents. [Margaret]

Ohh well, I suppose... [...]. It's more equivalent to the way we would make tea really. Tea is much more of a ritual with tea pots and all this sort of thing. [...] Coffee is more of a recent phenomenon. Whereas tea... I think it's more equivalent to making tea in our culture really. So yeah, it does [...] resonate. [...] Ohh, if people come round, it's nice to make tea. I love, yeah, having a nice teapot and China cups and. Having a bit of a... A ritual about it almost. [...]. Setting up a tray with everything on it and. Yeah, it's very English. Traditionally English, I suppose. And I understand that it must, that must be their equivalent really. [Alice]

Yeah, because I mean, [...] we were less of a coffee nation and more of [...] a tea-drinking nation. I suppose [...] But yes, so I think [...] that's social aspect of meeting with friends as well. And of course we have, yeah, we have reading the tea leaves and things like that as an alternative. So, it's an instant [...] relatability. [CSC]

Alex, Zora and David look even at the broader context, claiming that every culture shares equivalent or similar rituals (and even ways of doing things) to which everyone can relate. They note that seeing such parallels on stage makes it easier for audiences to connect with another culture, which was the primary intention of the creators:

I think you could say like for every country it has... A drink or a food or something that will always bring people together on that common ground. And [...] now that you've mentioned like tea in England. You know there's different types of tea. Everyone has their favourite way of making it, different ways of making it and [...] you can see the

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parallels and I think that's what's important for when you're viewing the playing things is that you can [...] see how. Similar lives in other countries are to your own and then it makes you think about everything else and how it [...] could happen. [Alex]

Well, there [...] was a joke in the play that everybody's got a different way of making coffee, and there was a ripple of recognition in the audience, because the same can be said about making a cup of tea in England: we all have different ways—I don't know about all these *lattes* and *espressos* but I do know that I like my tea in a particular way and like a particular temperature and so on, so that's something which is common, I think among all cultures. [David]

I think any aspect of food or drink and when talking about different culture will make that subject closer to people who are not of that culture. [Zora]

Lily admits it was the first time she learnt about reading coffee grounds, highlighting the universality of playful fortune-telling rituals that make sense in various contexts too:

I have heard about, [...] *reading tea leaves* at the bottom of a cup, and maybe that might be a fortune-telling thing, but I had never heard about reading from coffee [...]. But I thought that was really interesting and it just seems fun. Like [...] people will always make those little games with each other of: 'Ohh, this is gonna be your future.' And it's different variations of that. So, it was really cool to see that based around a drink. [Lily]

Alex points out very accurately the universality of coffee and its ability to create shared experience despite differences:

And for me it's highlighting something so simple. Things that [...] a lot of people take for granted. But [...] that's [...] someone's culture. And there's [...] something as simple as coffee can bring everyone together. Like you can go to a coffee shop in any country and find [...] something common with someone [...]. It has a profound message, [...] just that simplicity that we're all the same. We all enjoy coffee, albeit we'll do it different ways. But that doesn't make you any less of a person than someone who [...] might put milk in before the coffee. You might put coffee in before the milk. You might have no milk or it's all those little things that just makes you realise: we're all the same. We just do things differently. [Alex]

Additionally, MTYOL respondents made other interesting parallels and comments. For example, Margaret recalls the coffee ritual in Greece. Daniel tells the story of Americans drinking coffee in the UK during the Second World War and arguing about the best coffee in the US. Daniel, Lily, Zora, and Alice also note that coffee is still an emerging and relatively new trend in the UK,<sup>252</sup> mainly followed by younger people and immigrants. Interestingly,

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<sup>252</sup> "Britons are catching on to coffee." [Daniel] / "Coffee is more a kind of... young peoples' thing almost. It's more of a recent phenomenon. You know, cafeterias and all the different things you can use. Coffee is more of a



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Margaret and Elizabeth's conversation suggests that wine, rather than coffee, has replaced tea as the primary social drink in the UK.<sup>253</sup> Meanwhile, Zora drew some cultural analogies in the region, and provided a Croatian perspective, saying she remembers the discussions about making a proper coffee from her own experience.

Although coffee culture is not as deeply rooted in England as in BiH, and the responses were less profound and emotional than those of the Bosnian respondents who participated in ŠTO TE NEMA, the UK audience seems to understand why the play depicted coffee rituals. Alex shares his impressions: "I know the people, who sat in front of me, they definitely, could relate to the whole ritual behind it. Well, they were older than me. But I could just tell they were smiling and that little laugh like you could just tell, 'we get that, we do that,' [...] getting together, having a drink, catching up, having a laugh, having a joke and like I said, I think it's those parallels that hit home for people." Similarly, Albert reflects: "I do not drink coffee yet I understood the reasons for including the different ways of making coffee as a means of describing the diaspora that existed within Bosnia prior to the war and since." Nevertheless, Sturdy Colls has some doubts about whether the British audience got it ultimately: "I've been to Bosnia, I understand the significance of Bosnian coffee, until you've been [...] you don't understand [...] how important it is. And actually, one of the things [...] that Aida [Haughton] explained to me very early on, [...] was that coffee for Bosnian people has a very different meaning than it perhaps does for British people who grab it and go, [...] it's the absolute opposite and Bosnian culture." However, the other part of Sturdy Colls' citation claims that the play explained the importance of coffee:

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recent phenomenon." [Alice] / [...] "England has really introduced proper coffee in sort of the last 10 years; before that to find proper coffee in England was a bit of a challenge." [Zora]

<sup>253</sup> "They [MTYOL team] put the making of the ritual, the making of coffee at the centre of the society existed and probably is no different today." [Elizabeth] "Yes, I think you're right I might say 'would you like a glass of wine' these days?" [Margaret] "Oh, yes. Yes, yes!" [Elizabeth] "Forget the tea! Let's have open the bottle [...]" [Margaret]

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Aida and Sue [...] they didn't just want to show [...] the dark aspects of what happened. They wanted to show what Bosnian life was like and what was taken away, and [...] that opportunity to sit and have coffee with friends [that] was taken away. And it was really important [...] part of life. And again, it instantly makes you [...] realise [...] something about the women in the play. For example, you already feel [...] them very, very quickly because you watch them. You see them in the coffee drinking, is important. You see some key aspects [...] of folklore aspects, of reading the coffee, etc. And all of that. And [...] it's very quick and very instant that you understand the importance of it and [...] when I first watched it, I thought, 'oh, maybe this is sort of some artistic interpretation' because I hadn't been to Bosnia for a long time [...]. [CSC]

So, Sturdy Colls believes that MTYOL effectively conveyed the importance of coffee in Bosnian everyday life. She credits the creators for ensuring the quick introduction of the Bosnian coffee ritual and other essential cultural aspects on the stage. Sturdy Colls admits that upon watching the play, she wondered whether it was only an artistic interpretation, but while visiting BiH, she realised that the portrayal was authentic and meaningful. Finally, Sturdy Colls highlights that MTYOL was very important for the Bosnian audience, who saw the play and related to the coffee scene immediately: "I think also for Bosnians, the feedback that we've had in Bosnians, who've watched it as well. They [...] love it and they think it's really clever and [...] captures a key part of their [...] culture and reminds them of family, [...] of home [...]. Yeah, a lot [...] of the Bosnian who've watched, they've really said it, they picked up on the coffee straight away." As Zora concludes, in this way, Bosnian culture and experience were validated on stage. According to Zora, such a gesture was significant because Bosnians are an underrepresented community in the UK. The issue of being un/underrepresented but also non-representable was briefly discussed in Chapter 7 (see 7.1).

Alex and David from the UK, and even Lejla from BiH, claim that the coffee scenes presented by MTYOL have been a personal discovery for them, raising their awareness of the cultural significance of coffee, which they were previously unaware of. Also, Lejla's words confirm the cultural validation pointed out by Zora previously.:

[...] I'd never thought of it before then, as having a more cultural impact. That's how it came across that [...] there's a whole culture behind. Coffee and that inclusion. [Alex]

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It was very interesting. I didn't realise that there was such a special meaning to drinking coffee beyond responding to thirst. [David]

It made me understand... Maybe some part which I did not... put in the puzzle before, [...] it's funny for people who are watching it, maybe from another point of view who are not Bosnians, but I was glad to see, you know, in one part of the play they are saying like, 'let's put the coffee, let's do this. Let's do that. Take out the sweets. Take out the biscuits.' And it's actually our mentality. Like, whatever is happening, even if it's the like, most horrendous thing that is happening in that moment. The women will always like in the moment you enter the house, they will be like, 'sit. Let's drink coffee. Let's eat biscuits' [...] And you have just spent two- or three-hours drinking coffee and sharing your feelings, your thoughts. So, it's like psychotherapy. Really, it's like therapy, especially amongst the women. So, when I saw this in the play, I became aware of this process [...] before I was not aware of how much we spend our time in these rituals and how much we invest our time with our like with the other women with the coffee ritual and so on... using it as like psychotherapy, let's say it like this. [Lejla]

Interestingly, theatre volunteer Helen, who paradoxically saw MTYOL several times, did not even consider the coffee on the stage. Her answers reveal that she understood the play in more or less a manner as the authors intended it, but she simply did not see coffee. Helen responded to the questionnaire: "I didn't [think about the idea of embracing coffee]. [...]" What on earth has drinking coffee got to do with it!!!!!" Alice also underestimates the importance of coffee: "I just remember that they were talking about making coffee, but I can't remember what." As mentioned previously, Alice claims that MTYOL did not affect her as much as the other Moffat's play about the tragedy in the mines: "[...] they were talking about coffee. [...] How they made coffee and other things. So, I mean, talking about coffee is not going to have the same emotional impact as talking about the death of your men folk in tragic, you know, terrible circumstances." This demonstrates that Alice does not fully understand and/or feel the significance and depth of the coffee ritual in Bosnian culture, overlooking that coffee has a more profound cultural and emotional value. Thus, not all audience members ultimately resonate with the coffee ritual, but this does not mean they do not understand the point of the play, as in Helen's case. Nevertheless, the coffee ritual creates an emotional connection and intimacy with most of the audience. If this is not felt, the viewer is likely to be less engaged, as in Alice's situation.

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### 8.1.3 Audience Reactions to Coffee in 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 and 8372/IV

This group of respondents provided a broad variety of responses. To begin with, Diana and Lina believe that Zajc chose coffee because it is so ingrained in Balkan culture and everyday life.<sup>254</sup> Mara and Teja note that coffee is indeed a symbol: “I find it really symbolic because I know that the coffee is a thing in the Balkan countries; like more the more South you go, the more like meaning the coffee has. So yeah, I find it really a nice symbolic act better than [...] other traditional Balkan things, [...] food or [...] alcohol or something,” says Teja. Milica found Zajc’s idea meaningful and grounded in cultural ritual with a primary social role:

[...] I generally like the idea [...]. Like this preparation of coffee drinking and then slow coffee drinking. All of that is certain cultural ritual that is geographically situated, which has a deep meaning, and its [...] [p]rimary social role is to create space for people to talk or to be silent, but being silent is also a way of communication, but certain... so some attempts at genuine communication. [...] Coffee can be [a] formality, but this type of coffee and sitting with people at the coffee [...] and grinding before drinking the coffee, it’s actually putting some effort into communication. [Milica]

Meanwhile, Milan remarks that coffee served as an effective tool for comforting the audience and then disturbing them simultaneously during performance:

I think it’s an effective way of doing what it wants to do [...] like the performance. Itself. [...] I think [...] the aim [...] of the performance was to slowly creep us in into these feelings of uncanniness and disturbance. I think coffee is a very effective way to do that. Because [...] when we just sit and drink coffee, we get comfortable, we get warm, we get friendly. As he said [...], like best memories are made by coffee. So. [...] I think it was an effective like tool to paint this ambivalence of atmosphere that would slowly make itself more and more apparent as the [...] performance went on. [Milan]

Petra notes that adapting coffee was an interesting idea, creating a unique and comforting atmosphere. Nina also positively evaluated the idea: “The idea was perfect.” Ewan remembers that Zajc’s performances were built on a quote about missing coffee with a husband: “[I]t [...] must come from the quote about missing coffee with the husband. Because he says that at the top of the piece.” So, coffee also became a powerful prop for

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<sup>254</sup> “[...] the Balkans and coffee seem to be a certain way of everyday life; I mean, coffee, it has to be coffee! Just because of the place, the context, and the need for coffee in everyday life.” [Lina]

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storytelling, according to Daria: “[...] [I]t’s actually [...] a very long process to find that one storyline that is minimalist enough to stick in somebody’s memory and that really works on many levels. And I think that coffee did that for Ben.” In addition, Diana defines the usage of coffee as a powerful sensor tool.

Some respondents provided fascinating and profound interpretations of Zajc’s idea to use coffee. For example, Žan highly admired Zajc’s concept because, according to him, coffee simultaneously juxtaposes the ordinary (*coffee*) and the tragic (*genocide*). For Žan, coffee becomes an interpreting tool for understanding how trauma, violence, and ordinary life intersect:

I think it’s wonderful. I love coffee. [...] It’s not something you would think of as immediately associate with genocide, right? But. It’s good because even when you go... and I think he made that point today also like horrible things happen to people you [...] live through so much. But at the end of the day, you still, like, make coffee every day and you go on with your life. So, there is an element of [...] the *banality* of it, of violence in society and how we deal with it and go on with our lives even. With we had unimaginable traumas, right. We still grind your coffee and [...] you drink it. Yet it’s not something you think about. [Žan]

As far as I can remember, Žan was the only interviewee who noticed and well-articulated this paradox of trauma and resilience, i.e., people coping with trauma by continuing with their daily activities. Others may have said something similar, but not as articulately as Žan. For example, the quote from the interview with Lejla (MTYOL audience sample) that I quoted earlier (see subsection 8.1.2) says something similar about preparing coffee and enjoying sweets “even if [...] [the] most horrendous thing [...] is happening in that moment.” It is worth mentioning that Žan has a literature background and is very close to Zajc, which has probably influenced his views. Also, Žan’s comment nicely resonates with the prose poem *Memory for Forgetfulness* by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. The poem employs coffee as a compelling device to reflect on his personal experience and navigate the chaos during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982. Thus, coffee became a way of maintaining a sense of normality and solidarity during the ongoing occupation, which was also vivid in the

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Bosnian War. Fatima (ŠTO TE NEMA sample) remembers that coffee became an even more special ritual during the war: "There were times during the war when there was no coffee.

But there were also times when you could find it, real coffee! Uf! Then you carefully choose who you're going to drink it with." Similarly to Žan, performing arts researcher Jure observes that Zajc's use of coffee was an intelligent choice, as it immediately conjures up an association with BiH and pleasure, which contrasts with genocide that is something horrible:

Because obviously it was a Turkish coffee, so it's instantly something [...] associated [...] with Bosnia and with Yugoslavia and that stuff. And obviously [...] [i]t is as semi-connected with leisure or with free time, with the time of enjoying and [...] relaxing and having some fun and [...] resting [...]. So [...] in a way [...] it was connected with Bosnia and all that story, but also at the same time, it was a contrast because on the one hand [in 8372] we have like this genocide thing, which was horrible, which was dark. And then on the second one [in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*], there is a coffee which normally represents something nice, something that you should enjoy when you're drinking, [...]. So I think it was quite smart decision of Ben to use coffee as his like main activity. [Jure]

So, Jure describes how coffee was used differently in the two Zajc performances and how it contrasted. Regarding contrapositions, Vesna notes the paradoxical nature of coffee: it brings people together and divides them simultaneously in the region. Again, Vesna talks about the nationalisation and *ownership* of the coffee tradition, which is discussed in 4.2.1 and 8.1.2:

And coffee I mean. Coffee is just such a Balkan thing. [...] And it's also. [...] Another thing we can't agree on, it's a Bosnians says it's *Bosnian* coffee, Serbs say it's **Serbian** coffee, and it's just such a trivial thing. But if you're going [...] there and you're going to say the wrong thing, they'll tell you to go fuck yourself, not speak to you. So, I don't know. It's a thing that brings people together. But also divisive somehow. Because. [...] I don't know. The Balkans aren't called, [...] *Sod smodnika* for nothing. *The barrel of gunpowder*. Dirt. No explosive. I think it's in the nature of people as well their character. And just the there's so much hurt there. Just so much. <laughs> [Vesna]

Concerning performance criticism, young theatre critics who participated in the International Puppetry Festival and *8372/IV* have particularly highlighted coffee's material and tool properties. For example, Ewan noted that coffee is a practical decision over hot chocolate or chopping tea leaves. So, Ewan primarily looks at coffee more from a professional theatre criticism point of view. Similarly, Lina reflects on coffee's qualities as a tool, an object and an engaging material:

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Coffee. As a tool and an object, I think the idea is good because, on the one hand, coffee is a form of entertainment, a ritual, and a tasty cup of coffee in the morning [...]. On the other hand, it's the hard work of many people to deliver that coffee. So, I think taking that coffee bean and at least touching upon its journey to the cup is interesting. As if, though it's not reflected in the performance because it's not important, but in principle, it is the process of passing it along. On the other hand, the material of coffee itself is... [...] favourable because... it releases a scent, which automatically creates an atmosphere. Maybe it didn't necessarily work in this particular case, but I believe it could have in other performances because the smell of coffee is really strong. On the other hand, the question is what he generally wanted to achieve during the performance because if the goal was to crush something, precisely to grind it, rather than perform another action, I think coffee is a favourable object for the grinding process, simply because it grinds pretty easily and comfortably [...]. However, at the same time, it requires effort and focus. So that means we have that balance of time, ease, and the atmosphere being created [...] the scent. Also, [...] the sound of grinding coffee is very pleasant. So, I think it is a pretty good package for the participants. [Lina]

Elena agrees that coffee became a tool to bring the audience closer to the performance, as they are familiar with the smell and taste of coffee: "I think it's familiar to everyone [...] who can smell scents [...] knows the smell of coffee. Maybe quite a few people even drink coffee [...]. Maybe it's even part of someone's daily ritual, a daily routine [...]. So, [...] it's something close to people and maybe it could [...] bring the viewer closer to what's happening on stage." Additionally, Jana points out that in 8372, coffee became a symbol of endurance and process. She also notes the versatility of coffee: 8372 participants grained the coffee beans, and now they were drinking the coffee. So, the coffee was made from scratch, which is not practised in Slovenia anymore, as Vesna remarks.

Vesna also refers to Slovenian literature and Ivan Cankar's *Skodelica kave* [*A Cup of Coffee*].<sup>255</sup> In this story, Cankar himself refuses a cup of coffee offered by his mother, symbolising the rejection of her love and affection. Therefore, later, he regrets and feels guilty about such a decision. "[...] [I]n Slovenian literature coffee like really has a like a meaning of Ivan Cankar [...] and about something that is [...] cherished. And then something that is rejected and then something that you feel bad about rejecting [...] it's just this I think

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<sup>255</sup> The story may be accessed here: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A\\_Cup\\_of\\_Coffee](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/A_Cup_of_Coffee) .

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the whole *Skodelica kave* [*A Cup of Coffee*]," explains Vesna. It is worth noting that Nina also referred to the same story after the interview, suggesting that *Skodelica kave* is significant in Slovenian culture. Therefore, coffee plays a vital role in Slovenian culture, maybe not the same as in BiH, but it carries similar meanings of relationship and connection.

It is interesting to note the associations and reflections that go beyond what Zajc intended or explicitly presented. Elena from Lithuania did not resonate much with Zajc's 8372/IV, so she had her own interpretation of the performance. For instance, Elena noticed an ironic reversal of coffee's typical energizing effect: Zajc was losing energy while graining the beans rather than gaining it.<sup>256</sup> Zajc's mentor, Dobovšek, noted that one of the participants connected the burlap cloth with Latin American coffee, slavery and colonialism. Although Zajc used the cloth with no particular intention, certain objects have the power to evoke different meanings that may resonate with someone in the audience. Finally, Filip hardly connects coffee with the Srebrenica genocide.<sup>257</sup>

Surprisingly, Igor and Mara were highly familiar with ŠTO TE NEMA. Thus, Mara found Zajc's idea of using coffee in 8372 cute but repetitive in a way. As a researcher, Mara also automatically related to Tanja Petrović's (2016) research about coffee: "So I was thinking about it: 'OK, so he's playing with some symbols that are already kind of researched. Maybe it is a bit repetitive. But doesn't matter why not?'" While for Igor, 8372/IV seemed like a puzzle's insertion into a pre-existing landscape of Srebrenica memory through coffee:

[...] [Y]ou probably know that every year when [...] is the [...] Srebrenica [commemoration]. They make coffee for 8372 people, so this isn't just connection with Srebrenica with 1995, but with Srebrenica, and with symbolical meaning of coffee and

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<sup>256</sup> "Generally, people drink coffee because of the caffeine it contains, which is [...] the active substance [...] that gives energy, stimulates you. And there was just one thought that came to mind, [...] Benji, who is constantly grinding the beans, his energy is fading—unlike what coffee is supposed to provide. And this was the twist, the idea that even though coffee should give energy, in this performance, it took it away." [Elena]

<sup>257</sup> "The only connection is that. He put as many grains of coffee as people died in that I don't know that event or [...] whatever. I think it was. In Bosnia and when Serbians were killing Bosnians. I think it was probably 1992 or 1991. Was it?" [Filip]



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symbolic of Srebrenica today. So, [it] has these layers that that are very interesting for [...] me, so. [Igor]

I think because of this [...] symbolical meaning and it is very connected, when you Google 'Srebrenica' and put 'photos.' If you choose not to see this terrible photos, you will see a coffee so. [...] ŠTO TE NEMA. Yes. So, this is symbolical gesture and this is element that connects him to Srebrenica and [...] to symbolic meaning of Srebrenica. So, he made the like connection with the history and. Recent history and coffee is something that, and also he says at the [...] beginning of performance that when they were talking with the wives of killed Srebrenica men, that one of them told that 'I most miss drinking coffee with him in the morning' and this is like a leitmotif motive of all this Srebrenica. Leitmotif. [Igor]

The interview with Igor gives the impression that the use of coffee in Srebrenica remembrance became somehow natural and that ŠTO TE NEMA has become the iconic face of the Srebrenica genocide. Ewan became familiar with ŠTO TE NEMA after his interview with Zajc. Therefore, Ewan connects initiatives naturally: "So I know it must [...] come from the other piece because. The artist makes cups of coffee and he went, 'oh, OK, we can take that.' Kind of back a step almost by grinding the beans. So, I feel like I must. Be the correct answer, but artistically." Interestingly, this coffee/genocide concept has travelled around and now seems natural and, on some level, ingrained in the public mind.

### 8.2 Respondents' Personal Relationship with Coffee

I assume that respondents' personal relationship with coffee may influence their interpretations of coffee elements in art. The stronger the personal relationship, the broader their interpretations of artists' choices. Let us take a closer look at this proposition.

The **ŠTO TE NEMA respondents'** relationship with coffee varied. For example, three of them (Velma, Emina and Esma) do not drink coffee, but they understand its **cultural significance**. Emina and Esma described it as a kind of funny thing because it is a deeply rooted **tradition** in BiH, and they have gained a reputation among other Bosnians for being weird. Esma and Šejla said that coffee primarily means **community** and **togetherness**. For Šejla, coffee is a ritual that reminds her of her **family**. That is why Šejla and Nidira often

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associate coffee with family holidays like Bajram.<sup>258</sup> Jasmina, Nadira and Velma associate coffee with **joy**<sup>259</sup> and **enjoyment**: “[...] I guess, you know, what *ćejf* means. So I think everybody enjoys a cup of coffee and you will see every Bosnian drinking coffee with his family, especially in the time before. For example, my grandma, my grandpa always have, and my aunt always have the morning coffee together, talking [...],” says Velma. “For me, coffee is also very important, and I love drinking coffee. My mom also loves coffee a lot, so I think it’s great. Coffee is coffee,” adds Nadira. In addition to the **traditional and sentimental reasons**, respondents also identify several **pragmatic reasons**. Many seem to share quite a **modern approach** towards coffee. First, Dino admits to not drinking traditional Turkish/Bosnian coffee.<sup>260</sup> Secondly, a few say they need coffee to function or drink it for coffee’s sake. In this way, they emphasise the **energising quality** of coffee and/or the fact that it is their **daily essential**:

To me. Maybe a little bit something different than something that would maybe mean more to Aida [Šehović] <laughs>, let’s say, because I drink coffee for coffee’s sake. Regardless, if I’m meeting someone or not. [Mira]

Well, I can’t start my day without a coffee obviously, but then also then also I can’t drink any more than one cup a day either. So yeah, I mean, I literally I can’t start my day without it. [...] So, I have, like, a quadruple *espresso* or something. So, I get my shot and then that’s that. I’m all for a day. [Dino]

I’m that kind of person. I just, I wake up and I’m like, yeah, ‘I need a coffee.’ [Jasmina]

So, in the morning, without it, there’s nothing. Simply, I can’t wake up, I can’t function. And then for the rest of the day, it goes like that. [Lara]

Well, as I said, I started drinking it when I was 15. And I drink it every day. For me, it means a part of life. A part of everyday life. It’s really hard when there’s no coffee. [Fatima]

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<sup>258</sup> “Coffee reminds me of all kinds of gatherings, [...] during Bajram when my brother and father come back from prayers, we sit down, eat baklava, and drink coffee. And somehow, it’s part of every Bosniak’s tradition, and somehow nothing can happen without coffee.” [Nadira]

<sup>259</sup> “And I’m kind of being more happy about spending the day when I drink the coffee so.” [Jasmina]

<sup>260</sup> “[...] very rarely. I’m relatively modern to that for that question, but it has to be strong though.” [Dino]

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Mira chooses **practicality over tradition**: “I don’t identify with that part of the cultural trait.

So as much as Aida [Šehović] does, [...] she would think it’s unheard of that I would make Bosnian coffee and drink it out of a larger mug. For her it’s like a big ‘no,’ [...]. And [...] to me, that’s like just a matter of *practicality*, because I would like to have a coffee. So that’s how I drink it.” Also, Mira’s hospitality is flexible; she claims that she would offer a variety of drinks to her friends: “[...] if I have Bosnian friends over, I would make them coffee.

That’s what you do. Would I make them automatically coffee? I don’t know. That’s a good question. Like, I would make it for Aida [Šehović], but I usually would ask what do they want to drink. I would offer variety, not just coffee. <laughs>.” So, once again, the type of drink for Mira is irrelevant; what matters is the **relationship** and the **company**.

**Each MTYOL spectator** has a different relationship with coffee. Three come from the Balkan region [Lejla, Zora, Nora], and one share its heritage [Maria], so they take the coffee ritual seriously. For instance, Nora and Zora enjoy Turkish coffee. Nora frequently drinks it, and Zora has it occasionally; on an everyday basis, Zora prefers *espresso* and is very particular about it.<sup>261</sup> Both Nora and Zora claim that **coffee means everything** to them. Zora and Lejla highlight that coffee primarily means a **precious ritual in their routine**.<sup>262</sup>

Daniel associates coffee with **quality time** with his dear friends and something that is shared.

Lejla makes a similar connection as she enjoys her coffee the most with her **grandmother**:

“So, for me, why is it favourite to do it with my grandmother? Because then she shares her

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<sup>261</sup> “I am a snob. I have to have good coffee. I have to have strong coffee. I don’t drink instant coffee and I get very upset when people offer me instant coffee. I mean, I don’t get upset, [...] I politely decline.” [Zora]

<sup>262</sup> “I anchor my morning around my morning coffee. It is a ritual as well. Either on my own with me. [...] When people come to my house, I offer coffee and when I invite people to meet me, I invite them to meet me for coffee.” [Zora] / “Well, I cannot start my day without a coffee and it’s not because I have to. It’s my ritual and you know, like people say, ‘like drink green tea is healthier’ or something like this. But for me, it’s my ritual [...] it’s the start of my day and I would not change it for anything else. I simply come from a culture, which is and has been doing this ritual for many, many years and centuries, so for me it’s something that is a must. Like morning coffee, it’s a ritual, and [...] I would not leave this ritual.” [Lejla]

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history with me, she shares her past events. She shares her emotions. What is on her mind.

So, it's just the moment in which we really connect to each other. [...] I like it with my friends, with my mom as well and so on. But with my grandmother, it's the nicest ritual."

Sophia also associates coffee with her Lithuanian grandmother-in-law: "I felt that it was a great motif to have throughout the play. My Lithuanian grandmother-in-law came to England during the Second World War, and she had a particular way of making coffee; plus, she always drank her coffee with the spoon still in the cup. So, that particular motif was poignant to me. [...] I, personally do not like coffee. However, [...] my grandmother made it in a particular way, and I did enjoy her coffee." Thus, coffee for Lejla and Sophia is an

**important link to the people they hold dear**—their grandmother and grandmother-in-law.

It is interesting to mention that Daniel shares a more continental way of living and approach to coffee, as he describes himself. One of the reasons might be that his family once owned a coffee business in the UK: "Well, I almost laughed when she [the MTYOL protagonist] got the grinder out because my mother would have laughed and left because that's what my mother did a lot of one time and one time, she actually ground too much of it. And they couldn't use it. They had to run all-over, all-over Bolton and Manchester to reach out to other cafes." During the interview, Daniel gladly shared that story.<sup>263</sup> These family traditions of brewing coffee profoundly shaped Daniel's approach and **appreciation for the craft**.

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<sup>263</sup> "[A]ctually, my mother's family. They started a restaurant in the 1920s my mother's great aunts there in Bolton. And all the big things they did was coffee because one of their partners was an Italian. Now he'd escaped persecution in Italy. And he used to buy the coffee beans, and my mother used to sit in little room and when she was a child and grind them out. [...] She used to grind as much as they could use in the cafe for the day. And [...] they made that is very [...] popular now. That was in 1920s. During World War Two, a lot of Americans were [...] stationed there, so they came in and they wanted coffee and they actually queued down the street for it. But the thing was in in Britain, if you went to a cafe or restaurant, or a little tea shop. You didn't have to use your ration cards. It was off ration, and fish and chips were off ration as well, so you have as much as you wanted, so that was a big draw by people. So yeah, I mean they were. They used to go there." [Daniel]

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Alex, Zora and Sturdy Colls relate coffee to **enjoyment** and **socializing**. “When people come to my house, I offer coffee and when I invite people to meet me, I invite them to meet me for coffee. Even if we don’t drink coffee, but we go for coffee. So coffee is so ingrained in everything: going for coffee or seeing each other for coffee, [...] ‘I’ll call you for coffee’ is always a promise of a social event,” says Zora. “It’s not just drink as I enjoy having a good coffee, so it’s a good way of [...] catching up with people and seeing people,” elaborates Alex. Lily, James and Sturdy Colls also highlight coffee’s **stimulating** and **comforting** features. Lily added that she liked the coffee **taste**. “Relaxation and time for thinking” is another association drawn by Eleanor. Finally, Sturdy Colls highly **associates coffee with BiH**<sup>264</sup> “and it’s so funny because [...] as soon as we got to Bosnia, the play literally is all around you and the coffee drinking. And [...] I’ve got a serious caffeine withdrawal issue. Post-Bosnia and post-meeting them at the theatre because it is such an important part of life there,” she reflects. Whether for socializing, enjoyment or as a cultural tradition, coffee emerges as an **essential element** in the lives of these respondents, symbolizing not just a drink but a **meaningful ritual** that connects people across different settings and experiences.

The interview with Lejla was fascinating and long. We discussed many aspects of coffee drinking in BiH, including the peculiarities of **traditional coffee drinking** and the ritual of **reading the coffee cups**. Lejla also lamented the disappearance of Bosnian coffee-drinking traditions and globalisation. At the same time, she notes an opportunity to adapt to new coffee tastes and broaden one’s horizons. That is why Lejla shares her passion for introducing Bosnian coffee traditions abroad. Fragments of this interview can be found in [Annexe 18](#).

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<sup>264</sup> “So, for me now coffee will always be associated with Bosnia [...] and that happiness [...] that we felt when we were there because we were there to do something [...] very difficult. [...] But [...] everyone was so wonderful and welcoming. And we laughed and we danced and we drank coffee. And then we did that again. And [...] then of course, we visited the sites. And then we also needed to sit and drink coffee and talk to reflect on what we’ve seen. So, [...] it’s definitely a pick me up or way to connect with people and talk to people about bad experiences as much as talking about good ones.” [CSC]

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Regarding *coffee versus tea* debates, Daniel, Alex, and Henry note admiration for each drink.

"I have more tea than I have coffee," says Daniel. "I like them both at different times in my life. I've preferred one or the other, but [...] I now like both, though I generally choose tea. But I like coffee as well, especially if I [...] go to Italy and an *espresso* I love," explains Henry. Notably, Alex connects his relationship with coffee to the part of England he is from: "I like both, more probably more towards the coffee side. For some reason I've never really been a big tea drinker. But I think that's partly down to the part of the country that I'm from. [...] what we call the working-class area. So, coffee's a more go-to [...], give you that energy to get up and go sort of thing [...]." Meanwhile, Thomas describes himself as more of a tea man, telling a story from his student exchange in Greece, where he had to drink a cup of coffee as a **sign of respect** when he visited. Only Helen claims that **coffee means nothing** to her—no wonder she did not notice the use of coffee in MTYOL.

The **respondents who participated in Zajc's performances** also provided a wide range of answers about their relationship with coffee. Some relationships were profound, while others were more pragmatic or casual. For example, coffee brings back various **memories** for Milica, Milan, Diana, Teja, Jure and Daria. Milica, who comes from Serbia and has relatives in BiH, claims that Turkish coffee, in particular, brings back her childhood memories:

Especially Turkish coffee brings a lot of memory from childhood [...]. From interacting with that part of the family that is more tradition, that is from other parts of former Yugoslavia. Some of them I met quite late. They were not so present during my childhood because they were... only later I realised there was a war and they were on the other side of the war and so on. Only when I was like 20 something [...] Much later, after I learned about Srebrenica, I learned that one of my uncles lived in Srebrenica by 1992. I knew him as an uncle from Canada, and I knew he went to Canada because it was unbearable [...] to be in Bosnia, [...] actually he's from Srebrenica and [...] if they were, if they stayed few months later, they would be one of those killed because they would not be able to leave for Canada. [Milica]

Therefore, for Milica, drinking **Turkish coffee** is primarily associated with her **relatives**. She does not drink Turkish coffee alone but usually with her elderly family members, so that specific type of coffee signifies a certain connection. Additionally, Turkish coffee and

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fortune-telling remind Milica of her teenage years. Similarly, for Teja, Turkish coffee means a **special connection** with her Bosnian ex-roommate, with whom she used to have a morning tradition of making coffee in *džezva* and having it together. So, even a particular type of coffee/preparation (e.g., Turkish coffee) can be associated with certain people and memories.

Concerning general recollections associated with coffee, Diana notes that coffee brings back **positive memories** of her friends and family. As MTYOL respondents Lejla and Sophia, Jure relates it to his psychic grandma: “it was funny because she [...] has the same procedure as Benjamin with us. And then we drink coffee and then we talked with each other chitty-chatting some small talks. And then we put the [...] cup around and then she starts reading and for me, I mean Benjamin was obviously joking all the time.” Meanwhile, for Daria, coffee awakens a range of **fond memories**: “Mostly relaxed memories. Also, a smell that’s really nice and familiar. Also, there is... there are lots of different senses of place related to coffee. There’s a different coffee you’ll have in Vienna, or Ljubljana, in Bologna, right? Not to mention the US or Australia.” Regarding the taste, Milan remembers that his mother and grandma prepared very different kinds of coffee.<sup>265</sup> These different types and flavours of coffee, in a way, reflected the rhythm of their lives and occupations.

Otherwise, respondents stressed the importance of the **coffee ritual** itself. Milica, Mara and Teja define deep **connection**, **intimacy** and **quality time** as the most essential features of the shared coffee ritual; again, the substance does not have to be coffee per se, or can be different types of coffee:

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<sup>265</sup> “[...] [M]y mother would make very different coffee from my grandmother, [...] like my mother was she [...] was a tailor and she would make like she would make. Very, very strong coffee [...]. I was a kid, like 8th grade. I was like, ‘oh, mom, I want to drink coffee’ and she’s like, ‘fine,’ you know, ‘here you have some of mine.’ It was like with the gasoline [...]. It was so fucking sour it was [...] very strong to the point, it didn’t even taste like anything anymore... [...] [M]y grandma worked her last years when she worked in a [...] like in a coffee shop that was also bakery, so [...] you would get like cakes and ice cream there. [...] I think like my grandma made like this coffee with ice cream and lots of milk. Lots of sweet cream. And it was like [...] you went on the coffee, but you get more like a sugar rush from it than you feel coffee.” [Milan]

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I drink Turkish coffee only when. Big number of friends. When they come over and then we sit and eat cake and it's slow and it's children's birthday or somebody's, [...] it is something to do with sitting and talking. [...] [E]specially nowadays, [...] people have been... became very peculiar with their coffees, so. We [...] already know [...] who drinks which type of coffee, la, la, la. And we have all of them. [...] I think that you can have a ritual [...] with other types of coffee. But under the condition that it has certain repetitiveness [...] and ritual is always something that has other meaning than the performance itself. So [...] we as humans are inventing traditions all the time, but they become genuine rituals only after a certain amount of time. [Milica]

Even I have friends who don't drink coffee, but we always go to have coffee. Although we don't drink coffee because coffee means a ritual of sitting and of paying time to each other of concentrating on the other person and of having this very close, interconnected dialogue of opening. That's what coffee means. So [...] it's a well-chosen symbol, it [...] could be maybe in my eyes it was in that moment it was a bit predictable, but it is it. It cannot be... You cannot miss with that symbol. [...] [W]hen you hit in a very, very defined direction. [Mara]

I think coffee is... [...] a symbol of friendship. I always drink coffee... Ohh not [...] friendship... [...] not kindness. [...] Just the symbol of like deep connection with someone [...]. I like concentrate and drink coffee with my friends, with my family members, with the people I love. I take time and drink coffee with them, [...] people I want to share my time with. [Teja]

As mentioned by ŠTO TE NEMA respondents, and now by Milica and Mara, **coffee could be replaced by another substance**. According to Milica, it could also be something else, like a cigarette she likes to share with her mother, which is their ritual. Also, Jana **does not drink coffee but values the company** of her friends, so she is used to ordering a different drink. It is the **socialising quality** that matters to the most for many respondents:

It's a thing that. I've made the most connections in my life over. I've had the most talks I've had over coffee. Sober ones [...]. [Vesna]

It usually means if I'm drinking coffee with somebody, it always means that it's a social event, that it's an opportunity to talk, to hang out. [Lucija]

[M]aybe my relationship with coffee is [...] like when you go out to meet friends, you always say, [...] you want to grab some coffee [...]. It means [...] like: do you wanna hang out? [...] 'let's go sit in some place outside and [...] freeze in the winter and chain smoke cigarettes and sit.' [...] It can be anything [...]. Coffee is just a place... the placeholder [...] like [...] the [...] theory of [...] like linguistic sign and signifier, [...] like it's the coffee, [...] it's a sign, but it can mean like, anything, [...]. [Milan]

Although Jana **does not drink coffee**, she understands, **appreciates the ritual**, and feels included: "[I]t's a very present thing. Obviously in my life also [...], everyone drinks coffee



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and [...] it's more of a ritual. I feel like even when you smell the coffee, you see him [Zajc] like heating up the water, making the coffee. We named the coffee so [...] it's like [it]." Jure does not drink coffee either; he only drinks it with his grandmother: "I drink coffee only twice per year when my grandma is reading me the destiny from the coffee [...] cup." However, in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372*, Jana and Jure joined the group for the coffee cup out of solidarity: "It's like a small sacrifice. For [...] the performance to [...] go well," says Jana.

A significant proportion of respondents note the importance of coffee in their daily lives. Milan claims coffee is **essential** for him: "[C]offee is something that's been around so much in my life. You know?" And nevertheless, he admits that he was **not fully aware of coffee's cultural significance**: "[C]offee is something that [...] has been like cultural thing for me, even though I was not aware of it and I'm just, I'm still not." Moving from deep meanings to more pragmatic ones, Žan admits having a **coffee addiction**: "I'm [...] addicted to it. So, for me now it's sustaining my addiction." Daria and Igor note the **invigorating** and **energising** effects of coffee,<sup>266</sup> particularly noting its role as a **work companion**: "I don't know how it's in Lithuania, but in Croatia, coffee is. For 80% of people, your [...] Sancho Panza. She's always with you when you're working. When you do anything, you drink coffee," says Igor. He also reveals that he prefers working in a café rather than at home: "I wrote my PhD [dissertation] in coffee bars and they don't like me because I drink one coffee for five hours. But so for me, coffee is very important. In this not so symbolical meaning, but it's part of my work. It's part of my morning ritual [...]," says Igor. Meanwhile, Filip drinks coffee to **concentrate**, not for the sake of the ritual; he even sarcastically rejects it:

Unfortunately, I'm not much of a coffee drinker. [...] I do drink *cappuccino* and *coffee latte*. Like every day. But that's not really ritual for me. It's just I get it at the vending

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<sup>266</sup> "I didn't drink coffee [...] until [I was] 30 years old because I was always drinking beer and tea. [...] [N]ow I drink coffee and coffee and coffee and then my heart goes like [...] crazy. [...] [B]ut [...] it's still my working drink. [Igor]

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machine for, like \$0.50 I drink usually two per day. But it's just probably mechanical for me. For better concentration and. Attentiveness. So not like a social tradition, but I do know that like nurses. I think they drink coffee before their shift. But I'm not [a] nurse. [...]. All the professions also drink coffee before. Their shift, like from 7:00 to 8:00 [...]. They drink coffee for one hour and they call it like 'briefing meeting'. They don't actually do any briefing, they just. Drink coffee. [Filip]

For a pragmatic Filip personality, drinking coffee with a company is a **waste of time**:

I don't like to meet for coffee. [...] It's not very efficient use [of] the time.' It's better to go to like a museum because you can speak and look at things at the same time, but if you drink coffee, you usually just talk about. The waitress. How good the coffee is. And. Everyone that passes by, I think that's this conversation is not really. Beneficial. But if you. Have some [...] business to talk about it or anything. It's better to go for lunch because people need to spend time on lunch anyway. So, you find business and or like school or anything like that with lunch. But to just drink coffee. It's not. Efficient for me, that [is] my [...] philosophy about drinking. [Filip]

Regarding coffee preparation, some respondents like to make their coffee in different ways, and some are very particular about this. Lucija, for example, preserves old traditions by **making her coffee in the oven slowly and mindfully**:

I always prepare Turkish coffee and I know there's a big difference. I'm one of these old school people who I still have [...] the oven [...], that works on gas, so [...] it takes time for the water to boil and everything, and you have a lot of people like having like water heaters or this electrical stuff [...]. So it's a lot quicker and it's. It's funny, the perception of time, you know. How long does it take for you to make coffee? And then I think it all starts with that. I think we find it now really live in this high paced society that yes, affects also the coffee making and coffee drinking aspects. [Lucija]

Others like Žan and Igor prefer *caffettiera* or *moka*. "[...] I prefer *caffettiera* because it's stronger and the grounds aren't there," says Žan. "But my mom would say, 'oh, you're a Ljubljani hipster, you don't make your coffee in *džezva*, just get over yourself," jokes Žan. Žan admits that coffee is also a morning ritual with a dear person: "I can definitely relate to the lady missing drinking coffee with her husband. It is a ritual coffee first thing in the morning and then everything else." Teja and Petra like **different kinds of coffee**, including **Turkish coffee** and **coffee from the machine**. Interestingly, Nina does not drink coffee at home. When she is going out, she drinks Italian coffee. "I drink the Turkish coffee only in Bosnia and only in Istanbul, [...] only there I drink the real Turkish coffee," she claims. So,

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**the respondents have different habits and different tastes.** Even different types of coffee evoke distinct associations and meanings for them, which Vesna has explored well:

This Italian coffee [...] has a different vibe than the one from [...] *džezva*, the one that we fight about. This one is like with friends. [...] It's outside people around you and the one that we had [...] on the performance, the second part of the performance it's more intimate for me; it's the one you drink when people invite to your home. And I think that's an experience young people have in Slovenia because [...] [for] our parents that was the only coffee [...], they didn't have this culture just going out with your friends and drinking coffee as much as we do. [...] I really make the distinction between [...] if I'm drinking coffee outside. Sure. It's fun, [...] but it's different when you invite someone into your home and you make coffee together and it's that kind of coffee. Yeah, but that's also [...] really specific for people that are from [...] my parts of Slovenia and those that are more towards Croatia because I'm living with lots of Slovenians that are from the Primorska that's next to Italy and they don't drink that coffee at all. They only drink this Italian type coffee, this *espresso* coffee so. That's I think it's a personal experience [...]. [Vesna]

Finally, Lina and Elena are not coffee lovers. They have both stopped drinking coffee and claim it is no longer part of their daily routine. However, they do like the smell. Ewan does not drink coffee often, either. Lina and Ewan **prefer tea due to fewer side effects.**

Across all respondents, coffee emerged as a multifaceted symbol, representing family, community, tradition, enjoyment, productivity, and even personal identity. Personal relationships with coffee indeed influenced respondents' interpretations of coffee usage in ŠTO TE NEMA, MTYOL and different versions of 8372. This is most evident in the cases of Filip, Helen and Alice. So, Filip drinks coffee but has a very casual relationship with it and does not care much about its ritual significance. Alice is a traditional tea drinker who says coffee is a modern phenomenon in the UK, which she does not practise. Thus, neither Alice nor Filip saw anything special in coffee representations in the artworks. Only when I asked Alice if the coffee in BiH meant anything similar to tea in the UK, she said it might be the case. As coffee means nothing to Helen, she did not even notice the use of coffee in MTYOL. In contrast, those who define themselves as *coffee addicts* or passionate coffee lovers see deeper meanings in using coffee in selected initiatives. So, the stronger the personal relationship, the broader the interpretations of artists' choices are. Obviously, local culture,

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traditions and social habits also determine interpretations. Slovenians and Bosnians who do not like coffee still see the ritual's deep meaning and value the relationship. They also point out that the ritual does not have to involve coffee per se but can include something else—another type of drink or a cigarette.

### 8.3 *Comparative Coffee Cultures: Coffee Rituals in the Broader Context*

This section examines (Bosnian) coffee rituals in a broader cultural context, as discussed by the audiences studied. Situating Bosnian practices alongside similar/alternative traditions provides a broader understanding of the power of such social rituals to convey memory, community and cultural identity. Exploring these cross-cultural parallels illustrates how everyday practices, such as coffee drinking in Bosnia or tea traditions in England and Russia, serve as vehicles for preserving and expressing cultural and social meanings. This comparative approach sheds light on different coffee consumption practices and the role of coffee as a medium in art, transcending its role as a beverage to become a meaningful cultural symbol and mnemonic device.

Bosnian diaspora members from the US who participated in ŠTO TE NEMA often contrast the Bosnian coffee culture with the **individualistic, coffee-to-go** culture in the **United States**:

The one is like US is 'to go' and you do it on the go. In Bosnia you sit down for the coffee and take time. Literally take time. [Mira]

I think that [sharing a drink ritual] it's one thing that I miss in living in United States. I find that Americans are very individual nation. It's all about 'me, me, me, me, me and I'm the most important' and which [...] makes sense when you think back on the history of this country and how it is formed and especially out West where I live now [...] you would be alone, you know, cowboy that rides all the way out here to dig for gold or to start some sort of [...] venture and then maybe at most, it would be the nuclear family [...]. And it's very different than the way I was raised. It's very different than how. What I believe in. And still, [...] I'm the one who's training my American friends to be more like me because I find that being a part of a community is healthier mentally and just generally better. Because if you have more people than just your partner to rely on times terms of crisis, especially if, like the crisis that your partner left you and you suddenly have no one that you can lean on. [...] Is sort of a a curse of this way of living, [...] and I find that my coffee as a ritual like is I find that the pandemic was really

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damaging in that sense because everybody's now meeting on Zoom. [...] I've refused [...] to meet any of my friends who live in [...] [in my city] on Zoom. [...] And I lost some friends because of that. But to me this isn't the same. [...] [F]or me you have a one-on-one intimate connection; I need to sit in the same space with you and you can have your *espresso* and I will have my *matcha* and we will have a bonding connection. And I think that's a very, very important part of us as humans [...] we used to live around the fire [...] and share stories and connect. And we've in America walked away so far from that. That's why I think there's a lot more. Depression and loneliness. And [...] I don't think it's healthy for us so. [Esma]

[...] [I]t doesn't compare at all to like the States. I've never heard about any Bosnian person like turning down coffee. It's such a communal social thing and it's like done multiple times a day. There's specific, right, morning, afternoon, mid-afternoon, evening. Well, I feel like Americans are like 'I have my coffee in the morning. It's to work with my bagel. It's to get me through' or 'I have it to cram when I have exams.' Right? And so, it's almost like 'I need the caffeine.' Or 'I need like 10 pump pumps of caramel or whipped cream.' It's not at all. The sort of intimate social gathering that that, that Bosnian people have. [Emina]

Yeah, Americans don't have that ritualistic. They have like to-go cups from *Starbucks* [...], that's their version of a coffee ritual. So, I don't know if it resonated, but I think from people from our country, it's part of our culture. It's something we love about our culture. It's something that I miss. I live in New York City. I can't enjoy coffee for two hours like I do in Bosnia [...], you just sit for two hours and you drink your coffee. That's not something that's done here. [Adna]

For Bosnian diaspora respondents, coffee is not simply a beverage but a means of fostering connection and communal identity, making it a powerful medium in commemorative art initiatives like ŠTO TE NEMA. That contrasts the American view, where coffee often serves a functional, individualistic purpose rather than a meaningful social ritual. Slovenian interviewees who participated in *Stories of Coffee Grounds/8372* also distinguish the **coffee-drinking culture in Slovenia** from the coffee consumption in the US and/or the West:

It's not like that. I don't know. In America or in the West, they're just like 'coffee on go... coffee-to-go.' [Žan]

Thankfully, we don't have *Starbucks*, do do we? I hope we don't have *Starbucks* here. [...] It's a it's a crime against coffee, you know. [...] [F]rom what I saw, they don't actually have [...] coffee places when you [...] sit outside on the street. [Milan]

Žan and Milan criticise the American/Western approach, where coffee drinking has no relation to socialisation. Additionally, Milan (above), Lucija and Jure (below) express their

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dissatisfaction with the consumerist approach to coffee that is slowly spreading in Slovenia, but are glad that some traditions and rituals are being preserved for now:

I would say that in the recent years with like this *turbo-capitalism* [...], I can see a lot of people like buying coffee machines and stuff like that because it's [...] sexy and you have to spend your money somewhere, but otherwise, yes, we have like this Turkish tradition of cooking and drinking like Turkish coffee, which takes time [...]. [Lucija]

I think that this *Starbucks* culture is slowly coming here as well, so you can see people on the road drinking coffee. [...] Like coffee to go. Yes. [...] But in a way, I think this still is a ritual, you know, at least to some extent. [Jure]

Therefore, in BiH and, similarly, in Slovenia, coffee culture is deeply rooted in social connection, ritual, and community. In the United States, however, coffee is often seen as a functional beverage consumed quickly or for its energizing properties. Lily, an American respondent from MTYOL, confirms that the US does not have strong cultural ties to coffee and that it serves more as an energiser for most of the population:

Um, coffee is kind of [...] you just [...] drink it. We have a lot of *Starbucks*, so people will get like fancy or like, like, very syrupy sugary coffees. Uh, and some people have that kind of coffee drinking style. Other people just drink it for the energy or like an *espresso* or something. And then other people are very meticulous about coffee. So, if they wanna grind their own beans and then have their grounds and do the whole French press thing, but that there's no real like... Cultural tie to coffee. It's kind of just a beverage that people use to stay awake or that taste good to them. [Lily]

I asked the Bosnian interviewees living in the US whether the audience could understand the coffee ritual in ŠTO TE NEMA. They are unsure about that, but they note that Šehović had a good way of introducing the audience to the meaning. Even if the audience did not get all the layers of Bosnian coffee traditions, they could get the main point of ŠTO TE NEMA:

I think there were few people that kind of understood the coffee culture in a way, because it's not terribly unique for Bosnia. It is unique that [...] we kind of do it so much, but [...] coffee is a common [...] theme for a lot of people. There was a bunch of people here probably drinking coffee. [...] so [...] in a way you can connect to it because you know what it is. And to see it used in such an application or [...] in such a way. [...] It maybe gives a different meaning to it and it makes them relate to it also closely. [Dino]

I don't think they would necessarily 100% understand the meaning of the coffee culturally, what it means in Bosnian culture [...] when you're waiting for someone to come over for coffee. I don't think that part maybe came across as such as clearly [...]. They know you are serving coffee, waiting for someone who is not coming back. They

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understand that part, but they don't understand how dominant coffee culture is actually in Bosnia and that you're actually making it even if you're not drinking it like just to talk to your friend. And socialise [...], and not necessarily just to drink the coffee like you would here. [Mira]

I don't know if they really, we tried to explain that [...]. The idea that Aida got where the hardest thing for these women, these mothers, these [...] wives were that they didn't have that person to have their cup of coffee with in the morning [...]. [Emina]

I don't know if they got. [...] I think that maybe they tried. I think Aida had a good way of explaining it and even showing and teaching, [...] she had workshops where she would teach people how to make it and how it's done so. It's like in that way [...] people were curious, but it's such a big part of our culture. [...] So yeah, I don't know if they they definitely don't. Get it in. The way that we experience it, I think. But Aida had a really good way. I think she did it in the right way, where she really, really put in the effort to explain and to show. [...] [Adna]

[...] inviting others to understand it was probably a challenge, but I think she did well with [...] travelling with the project. I think it's... still people got it [...]. [Adna]

However, Adna believes that people from the countries where coffee has a more profound meaning related to ŠTO TE NEMA more than North Americans: "I think some other cultures identified with that [...] people from Colombia came up to her many times and were like, 'we also make coffee!'" So, Adna thinks that the local culture from which the respondent comes determines how much/little the respondent will resonate with the coffee usage in the project.

When discussing coffee, I was curious whether respondents identified a distinct Bosnian coffee culture or had a broader view of the region. Some ŠTO TE NEMA respondents claim that coffee has the same or a very similar meaning throughout **the Balkans**:

I think that all of us, in this part of the former Yugoslavia, coffee means the same to all of us, it means the same thing to all of us. [Lara]

At some point, when this madness started in these areas, crazy minds even started separating the languages. But in essence, we all speak the same language; we don't need a translator between a Serb, a Croat, or a Bosniak—it's the same language. There are just some small differences. For example, we say *kahva*. In Croatia, they say *kava*. They drink *kava*. And in Serbia, they say *kafa*. Now, we joked around. It didn't matter that there was a war. Even if there wasn't any coffee, you'd still find it somewhere. We'd say, 'Let's go have a drink.' It didn't matter what we were drinking. *Kafa*, *kahva*, *kava*. Give us whatever you have. To us, it's all the same. [Fatima]

Well, I think that in general, Balkan people, coffee is very, we can relate to coffee everybody because when you go, for example, in Italy people there they don't sit sit

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and for hours talk about they just come there to drink *espresso* and they're like, gone. But here it's very typical for this region and I believe that other countries have their own like symbol. [Šejla]

I don't think it's [...] quite different, but it's just... Of course it's different in the bigger cities, but I think in its smaller communities in general, in the Balkan area, we kind of reflect, we kind of equal the coffee with spending a special time with someone and spending kind of a couple of hours with someone [...]. 'Oh, let's kind of drink coffee and chat' and sometimes [...] people drink of... Not only one cup of coffee, but several cup[s] of coffee during the day and they kind of look forward to that coffee to that part of the day when they're relaxed, when they read the book. When they [...] go to the balcony. [Jasmina]

I think they're pretty similar, but we just... [...] maybe that's also one way of thinking, like how we actually the same in one way. I think they're pretty much similar, but people sometimes will deny it. [...] I think. It's some bit more specific in the Balkans, but in Bosnia specifically to have that coffee with your family, maybe that's the only difference. But I think for the most of the region it's the same. Just using the different names for the coffee. [Velma]

So, respondents highlight a few interesting points. First, Jasmina notes that there are more differences between cities and rural areas than between the different countries in the region.

Žan and Jure also distinguish between urban and provincial differences in coffee drinking:

I think [...] it depends if you're in the countryside, it would be much more usual to have guests at home. But if I think of the urban culture, it's more about going out and being served. I think that's, you know, that's how it was historically, the bourgeois, the city dwellers like drinking coffee in salons. [Žan]

In a way. It's similar, yes, but especially in the city, probably people are drinking coffee much faster nowadays. In the past, probably it was much more like a little gathering and the social activity in a way. [Jure]

Second, similarity or difference refers to a state of mind rather than a reality. In other words, it is a political question that concerns the *nationalisation of coffee*, briefly discussed in subsections 4.2.1, 8.1.2 and 8.1.3. In short, coffee either becomes a subject that *connects* the broader region based on similar coffee-drinking traditions (as noted previously by Lara, Fatima, Šejla, Jasmina and Velma) or a subject that *divides* into different nation-states or even entities, embodying a specific national (coffee) identity: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Macedonian, etc. (Fotiadis, Ivanović, and Vučetić 2019). Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, newly created nation-states began asserting ownership of particular foods and



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drinks, including coffee, which had previously unified them and contributed to forming a shared Yugoslav identity. In any case, a few respondents contrast Bosnian *slow* enjoyment of coffee (*ćejf*) with faster (global) consumption of coffee:

Just there's no rush. Bosnian coffee is essentially a sign of enjoyment. [...] In Bosnia especially, there's no drinking in a hurry; it's meant to be enjoyed slowly, with pleasure. That's a must. [Fatima]

[...] [F]or us, coffee... *ćejf*, and [...] it's something you drink slowly, with some tranquility, you enjoy it. While I think that in the rest of the world, coffee is more something you drink quickly. Work, everything moves fast, you ask for 'give me coffee' and drink it at once. There's no enjoyment, you don't savour the coffee like in Bosnia. In Bosnia, people especially enjoy their coffee. [Nadira]

The ritual of drinking coffee, but especially in Bosnia, it is so important because it's multilayered. It's not just solely spending time with someone, it's umm... Sharing the best and the worst moments of your life by drinking coffee and it usually takes a lot, way more time than people generally, even just by going to Zagreb and having coffee with someone, they will tell you, 'OK, we drank our coffee. Bye bye.' That's about it. And it could take [...] 15-20 minutes or half an hour. But here. It's not the same, it's [...] [a] ritual because it's not just coffee, it's everything else that comes with it. [Hana]

A similar question about coffee in BiH, Slovenia, and the region in general was asked of the audience in Ljubljana. Part of that audience claimed that the whole **post-Yugoslav space** has a similar understanding of the coffee ritual. Mara only sees a difference in preparation, while she, Lucija and Žan agree that the ritual and its meaning remains the same:

Well, I would say [...] the differences in cooking, but there is the cooking coffee and there is then the ritual. Like, I don't know if you go to the seacoast, you will have *caffettiera*, *kokoma* and you will have this in Croatian coast and you will have this in Slovenian coast. And I don't know what happened in Montenegro. And then older generations still prefer Turkish coffee, like from *džezva*. I have no idea what what happens now in Bosnian homes, do they also drink *Nescafé*, like [...] contemporary Slovenians, but I kind of see it more [...] or less the same. And I always see it like even if we don't agree, we still can have coffee because when you sit for coffee you it is kind of the closed space of 'OK, now let's share something.' Something that we can find mutual, even if we are enemies. OK, let's have coffee and then depart our ways. [Mara]

When you are invited for coffee, especially if it is in the [...] café, it means some kind of socializing, and if you're invited for coffee in someone's home, I would say Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia. It means [...]: 'you are my guest. Now sit here and let's share something. [...] If we don't know each other, let's try to meet each other. Or if we already know each other, let's kind of check on each other: How are you? How am I?' And it's all... [...] a very personal. Coffee doesn't usually include some kind of political debates. It's more about personal space. [...] I would say that my personal experience of coffee matches is collective experience of Balkans where I include also Slovenia. And

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coffee is definitely means of connection [...]. I would say there are differences in preparation. But I think that the ritual stays the same. [Mara]

I think here in Slovenia we have like this culture of like long. Not as like the the rest of the Balkans, but still, it isn't like Italian way of the 'let's drink coffee standing up' so. It does have a lot to do with like hospitality, with being open with. With talking, with connecting. So I think [...] yes, it has a very symbolic and also metaphoric value. [...] I think it's quite similar. It starts with the way we make coffee. And [...], it's kind of. I think it's really really similar. [Lucija]

I mean, we were a part of the same country for a long time. I think coffee culture is very rampant here. We all like sitting down and drinking coffee. It's not like that. I don't know in America or in the West, they're just like 'coffee on go... coffee to go.' We have a lounge culture for sure. Yeah, looking around and drinking coffee, sitting around and drinking coffee, I think this is something we could we [...] definitely share with Bosnians. I have two Bosnian friends and... I think we enjoy coffee equally. [Žan]

Jana and Petra admit that they do not know the Bosnian coffee culture well, but they reflect on some (slight) differences. Petra highlights the length of the ritual, and Jana considers the different ways of preparation:

I don't think it's completely different, but as far as I know, people from Bosnia, they really stay for whole afternoon together and drink coffee. And in Slovenia, we don't. At least my friends, my family, we drink coffee and we go then. [...]. Or even at home you drink coffee and then you do other things. And in Bosnia, as far as I know, they just stay for hours drinking coffee, cooking coffee. So. It's not the same, probably. [Petra]

Here I think I mean some people have the same kind of way of doing it [...] I think it's called Turkish coffee and like actually doing it the Bosnian way. But some people, I mean many people also do it on like machines [...], completely like... bar style. So, I don't know. I think. There is the tradition of like the pot in which you make the coffee and [...] like kind of a morning ritual to people. But I think it differs from house to house [...], it's not as I mean, I don't know how strict it is in Bosnia except for in, like, traditional coffee house and stuff like that. But I think it is quite similar and it probably. Comes from Bosnia anyway, so. [Jana]

Daria, Teja and Jana admit that they may not know enough about Bosnian coffee culture, but it seems to them to be different from the one in Slovenia but has intersections:

I can't compare it to Bosnia because I haven't been yet. [...] From what I've heard and from what I've experienced in Turkey, or in Belgrade it's not the same culture. So Ljubljana is kind of at the crossroads of different coffee drinking traditions. Also, the coffee shops are very different so. I think it's difficult to compare [...] the entire culture, although of course some of the practices related to coffee are similar and they do intersect. [Daria]

I don't think I know it enough. Good enough, but I think Bosnian people take more time and they put more, more meaning into it. Like here is like, in Slovenia you drink

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coffee and then go. Everything is in a hurry. But I think Bosnian really take time for coffee because I also know my friend. [...] She's used it from home and she drinks coffee for an hour. I drink it in 10 minutes and then go. So yeah, I think it's like [...] a protocol [...], it's not [...] an easy thing to do. Like it's coffee time. [Teja]

I think Bosnia is really known for like proper coffee and like if you want to have a proper coffee, you do it the Bosnian way. And people like when they go to Bosnia, they must have like a cup of coffee, made the Bosnian way. [Jana]

Milan, Nina and Jure seem more convinced that coffee is drunk differently in BiH than in Slovenia due to different ways of serving it (Milan), a different culture and stronger ties between people (Nina), and a more profound ritual itself (Jure):

No, no, no, no, no. No, I don't think so, because they have [...] their Bosnian [coffee/way]... Bosnians, I think especially are famous for their kind of coffee, which is [...] in those very, very small cups made out of bronze. I think that, [...] as I keep saying, I'm not an expert, but, [...] when I had like this "traditional Bosnian coffee," it was different. They make it in a different [way]. Like they also like put a lot of sugar in those small small small cups. So yeah, for sure different. [Milan]

No, completely different. I think. [...] Differences because we are different culture [...], Bosnian[s] are so, so connected people, big families. We are too much individualistic culture and coffee in our country. I think it's more like chatting something and not not so profound, nothing, no, no deep connections between people. But in Bosnia, I think it's quite strong dynamic during, sharing coffee time because they live different than us. The family are more connected the family members and [...] I think the whole communities and villages also. We are very individualistic persons in Slovenia. [Nina]

No, I think not. I mean in a way... no, I think that in Bosnia it is much more of a ritual. [...] I was in Sarajevo, I've been there just for once in my lifetime, so I'm not sure how it is there now, but I can imagine that [...] coffee is always a social activity. So it's not only to drink coffee, but to meet some friends and talk with them [...]. [Jure]

I asked respondents who participated in Zajc's performances whether they thought Slovenians understood the significance of the coffee ritual in Zajc's creative works, and I received quite different answers:

Yeah, I think Slovenians can relate to coffee being a ritual you have with someone that's close to you. Yeah, for sure. [Žan]

I [...] realised that some people have very dislike stereotypical understanding of or very simplistic understanding of what drinking coffee means to people. [...] [W]hen you're in Slovenia within 5 minutes when you mentioned drinking coffee and lalala, they would say that [...], when Slovenians go to Bosnia, they're usually the one[s] who are fastest coffee drinkers, [...] they like drink it and everybody are taking their own time. But when Slovenians go to Italy, they are the slow ones because Italians are not even

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sitting down [...], they just power it and they continue. And this is funny information, but honestly, for me, drinking coffee is so much more than like the fastness. [Milica]

I think it depends on your family background; I would say this is probably the main thing. I think maybe the second performance [*Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372], yes, it was kind of from Benjamin's part, it was like he didn't follow the ritual of how we make coffee correctly, [...] because he was using water heater and [...] the coffee wasn't that good at all. And [...] there was a lot of kind of small details that went wrong, but I think that if he as a performer would like, really honour the ritual, whatever the ritual of making coffee is actually, it would give this a little bit more of a like, festival ceremonial vibe to the whole thing. Now it was like, 'OK, let's make coffee, OK. It's not going to be very good [...], we have to drink this now, OK.' [Lucija]

Žan, Milica and Lucija suggest a layered understanding of coffee rituals among Slovenians, with some appreciating it as a symbolic gesture of connection (Žan), some noticing cultural contrasts in the practice (Milica), and others focusing on the ritual's authenticity and its potential to elevate the experience into something more ceremonial (Lucija). This suggests that a partial understanding of Zajc's pieces among Slovenians, where personal experience and background, cultural context, and tradition influence how deeply the significance of the coffee ritual is perceived. I was also curious to hear Igor and Zora's **perspectives from Croatia** on whether, in their view, the meaning of coffee differs across the region:

I would think it's more pronounced in Bosnia. [...] [A]nd again [...] the only place I have visited in Bosnia is Mostar. But I remember being served coffee. It's very... Like the ritual of having coffee and having the *džezva* and the *fildžans*. Is very pronounced. I think partly because Croatia, if Croatia has a big coffee drinking culture. [...] I think it is more to align with the West and with Italy and with *espresso* and with *espresso* machines. But I think the ritual of making coffee and having the crockery around the coffee people have it in their homes, but it's also a nod to... I'm very consciously going to say the Eastern culture. I'm saying that from a point of view of a Croatian person. So East is always relative. And then you'll find people in Croatia who have different relationship with that East. So, some people want to reject it. And some people really fully embrace it. [Zora]

[...] [C]ulturally in homes you wouldn't have *espresso*; culturally in homes, people were making Turkish coffee. [...] I was 13 when I started drinking coffee in cafe bars, but I think [...] *espresso* machines and cafes were a long-standing thing. Cafes were very rarely cooking Turkish coffee, although in Zagreb in the capital of Croatia. When you climb up the mountain and in there, like mountaineering cafe. They still make just Turkish coffee; they don't have [coffee machines]. So, there are there are several places in Croatia that I know I go to that only make Turkish coffee. [Zora]

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According to Zora, coffee culture in Croatia is a fusion of Western and Eastern influences, where both *espresso* and Turkish coffee have their place, depending on the social or geographical context. Beyond this geographical dimension, Igor also reflects on the generational one. He believes that the younger generation, including his students, may lack knowledge of Bosnian/Turkish coffee traditions because they miss the sensory and ritualistic experiences familiar to older generations living in the same country; thus, they probably do not relate to them. However, Igor points out the usage of mortar, which adds a new layer of meaning and powerful sound:

I think that this part would know this with *džezva* and all that. My [...] grandma, my mother would know about this. But when I was working as journalist in Sarajevo festival, I didn't see *džezva*. I just saw coffee. I felt that smell. This part [graining] my grandma was doing. So, this is maybe uh generation later and Benji perhaps doesn't know that this is exist or he [...] didn't know where to buy it so but it would be also good [coffee grinder]. But this is like mechanical element and this [graining with a mortar] is completely physical element. And this with this part [coffee grinder] you won't have this crashing of bones, like my colleagues said. [Igor]

Coffee is very important also when you come to Sarajevo to Baščaršija or somewhere like that, you get the Turkish coffee, not this coffee from machine like in Croatia and everywhere else. So, this is strongly Bosnian thing. I think this didn't go very universally. [...] OK. It has universal message but it stays in location very very strongly connected with that location about which it talks. [Igor]

On the other hand, Igor agrees that coffee drinking is widespread in both countries: "So, coffee for us is something when you order coffee, you know that you will sit for one hour at least. And not drink coffee. You will talk. You will read. You will work and slowly lick coffee until it melts completely. And it's similar in. Bosnia, yes, they are drinking it like with sugar, so they're even worse than us." So, despite regional and generational differences, coffee drinking serves a similar function in both Croatia and BiH: it is a leisure activity deeply integrated into social life. Coffee is not just a quick drink but rather an experience of extended time for conversation, work, or relaxation, qualities shared by both cultures.

Respondents from Bosnia and Croatia tended to express dissatisfaction with **the Italian**

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**coffee culture**, in particular its **fast consumption**, and to contrast it with the Bosnian or

Balkan coffee culture:

[...] [W]hen you go for example in Italy people there they don't sit sit and for hours talk about they just come there to drink *espresso* and they're like, gone [...] [Šejla]

It's not something like in Italy with *espresso*, [...] you enter, you drink your coffee and you go. For Bosnians, it's a three hours procedure. Like you sit, the coffee is made. Then you will sit... like start talk then it's like or I don't know, 2-3 hours you're drinking bit by bit this coffee, you're eating the sweets and you just turn around and you have new friends. You have met a lot of people like this. [Lejla]

I know when we went to Italy, and Italy is like a home of coffee. They like [have] great coffee. But the home of *moka*, [...] home of this [...], home of that. They... we had some project and we had meeting and meeting was lasting for three hours. It was terrible and then they said 'OK, now we'll have coffee' and we said 'yeah!!!', and [...] they made this coffee, drink [fast] and said 'OK, let's go to the meeting.' [Igor]

For Šejla, Lejla and Igor, coffee is more than a drink; it is a cherished social ritual that takes time. For that reason, the fast Italian coffee consumption and only a short moment of interaction appear superficial compared to the Bosnian/Balkan tradition, where coffee serves as a foundation for building relationships and fostering a sense of community.

It is also worth discussing the ritual of drinking tea and whether it is as important to the respondents as coffee. For example, Daria likes coffee, and, as mentioned, it brings back different memories for her. However, when it comes to the notion of ritual, she seems to identify more with **the ritual of drinking tea**:

I was born in Russia and I lived there for the first seven years of my life, and that was probably when I spent... No, it was definitely when I spent the most time with my grandmother and we didn't drink coffee, obviously. But she did have this tea ritual, which was nice. I mean [...], gathering around tea and also when you were little, you could drink it from saucer. That was that was really important. And in a way, many of my later memories of sharing your coffee are sometimes similar to that, [...] although they can also be very different, because you can also have an *espresso* which you drink really quickly, which is not something that you do with tea, yeah. [Daria]

Daria also thoughtfully reflects on different beverage traditions and their fluidity, considering how global trends interact with local traditions, the role of social spaces in drinking culture, and the emotional connections people develop with specific beverage customs:

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I mean nowadays there's so many cultures in different places that it's hard to say like if I remember Russia [...]. I think tea maybe has lost some of its prominence with the spread of coffee, different kinds of coffee. Then again, coffee might have [...] taken on many [...] social functions of drinking of whatever hot drink that's not alcoholic together. But then again, like when I lived in Russia as an adult for a while, I'd missed the coffee culture in Ljubljana because. At least in Moscow, it seems that the more Anglo-Saxon kind of way of drinking coffee [...] big mugs with lots of toppings in everything, it's that culture that that came there and stayed. Whereas here [in Slovenia] people are very particular about *espressos*, smaller *cappuccinos*, [...] coffee, that is really tasteful and not necessarily super sweet and syrupy. So, there are lots of differences. There are lots of these cultural specificities, but I'm not sure that. In the end, that's the social functions are as vastly different in these two spaces. Maybe. Yeah, maybe in a Turkish or in a Bosnian *kafana*. You could also talk about the specificity of space but in Ljubljana [...] we don't really have coffee shops as institutions like Vienna does, right, Viennese coffee shops or in Paris or in Brussels. [...] Trieste. Yeah, these, like, huge spaces. Like *Kavarna Kinodvor*, [...] but like triple [...]. Spaces also with huge windows. So that people [...] come for coffee and for work. There isn't much of that here [in Slovenia]. [Daria]

Daria's observations reveal both convergence and specificity within European coffee and tea practices. In response to my question about whether the **tea ritual in Russia** is the same as the coffee ritual of getting together in Slovenia, she reflects:

I mean, if you read Chekhov, it does [resonate] obviously. But then again, it's difficult to say because [...] Chekhov writes about this kind of intelligentsia and [...] a different time, obviously. But [...] I think that many of them do cultivate this afternoon tea or tea with friends' kind of tradition. [...] [A]t least compared to Slovenia, culturally tea is much more important for Russians. [...] Drinking tea and being a tea pro in Slovenia is more like this character trait. [...] Or [...] tea is something you drink in the mountains or tea is something that you drink when you're sick. And it's mostly about [...] purple infusions. And not about black tea, really. Or green tea. Whereas in Russia for decades, [...] this staple kind of Indian black tea was something that made people comfortable around one another, I guess. And that came with jam. So, in a sense, yeah, it does get a little closer to some of the English traditions, I think. [Daria]

Ewen from Scotland was asked to compare the **UK tea culture** with the Balkan coffee culture. Although he sees them as **different social rituals**, he thinks they are **universal experiences** that could bond strangers in different contexts:

I think the like coffee culture and tea culture are different. But to all extents and purposes they share the same. [...] Like to have your neighbour round for a cup of tea is the same thing here as it would be anywhere else in the world, but it would be a cup of coffee. Maybe Britain's just not as like stimulated [...]. But yeah, it fulfils the same purpose of... This is a warm beverage that we share that I can make for you as a kindness, but it's not actually that much of a hassle. We would just have tea instead. We don't, [...] we have cafes and you go out for a coffee. I don't think we're quite as... We're as good as [...] at leisure. I think coffee can often be like 'I need to have one in

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the morning or grumpy. I need to have one because I didn't sleep well. I need to pick one up on the way to work. I need to have one in my break. I need to have one of my lunch. I need to have at the end of the day so I can go home and do stuff and be awake.' I think we're a bit more. Regimented. In terms of coffee, coffee not being not being a drinker experience, what we want is caffeine. What we want is a stimulant. And there and tea is what we have is a 'ohh a nice cup.' 'Yeah, I that would be nice. [...] That would make me feel good and warm inside.' 'And I could have that with. Anyone on the planet,' even as an icebreaker like two complete strangers can have a cup. One can make the other a cup of tea. And then they can chat about how they like their tea. And someone will have a story about this time they're having a cup of tea. So I think it serves the same different contextual environments. But having a cup. I feel. Uh is a universal experience. *It's just the what's inside the cup [that is] the different.* [Ewan]

While Daria emphasises the historical context of tea's emergence in Russia, Ewan focuses on everyday acts of kindness, offering a modern approach to the tea tradition in the UK.

Similarly, he reflects on coffee's functional aspect in the UK, driven by the need for caffeine.

Overall, Daria and Ewan capture the universality and divergence of beverage cultures in different countries. "It's just the what's inside the cup [that is] the different," as Ewan said, but the social ritual itself is universal and easily relatable. That is why it has been used and re-semanticised by artists—to be effective and to touch each participant personally on an emotional level through their own (pragmatic) daily practices and social engagements.



## CONCLUSIONS

The study has proved to be productive in both a theoretical and a practical sense. It advanced the understanding of the relationship between memory, art and activism in memory studies, confirming that artists find creative, inclusive and pluralist ways to engage with the problematic past and propose their own narratives transcending beyond the hegemonic ones. In my selected cases, artists act as *memory activists*: they acknowledge war crimes, come to terms with the past, engage with trauma and work towards post-war peacebuilding and collective healing. Additionally, their proposed alternative forms of remembrance challenge the traditional forms (e.g., official memorials, state-sponsored ceremonies) that failed to offer community-driven strategies to remember tragic events and create broad access to them. To create an interactive experience for broader audiences, artists purposefully rely on (Bosnian) coffee rituals and traditions, which serve as a universal symbol of human connectivity and solidarity in responding to current social contexts, such as genocide denials and ongoing violence, and potential of memory *artivism* to advocate for social change. In this way, Aida Šehović, Aida Salkić Haughton MBE, Susan Moffat, and Benjamin Zajc create new narratives that function beyond the rigid and homogenising narratives, breaking away from the sphere of influence of the political elites.

Selected art initiatives base their commemorative pieces on facts established by international courts (ICTY and ICJ) applying the *genocide* term. They also use the iconic number of 8372 genocide victims fostered by the Srebrenica Memorial Centre and enable the victims' voices by relying on testimonies. While focusing on the Srebrenica genocide, *My Thousand Year Old Land* (MTYOL) also aims to introduce its audience to the other crimes committed against the Bosniak population during the Bosnian War. ŠTO TE NEMA volunteers from the Bosnian diaspora also often shared their personal stories of emigration due to ongoing

## CONCLUSIONS

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violence and ethnic cleansing in BiH; however, the project itself focused exclusively on the Srebrenica genocide. In his performances, Zajc used the terms *genocide* and *massacre* as synonyms, not because he was a genocide denier but because he felt that the term *massacre* carried more weight in the Slovene language and could communicate the tragedy better.

MTYOL, ŠTO TE NEMA and different variations of 8372 avoid typical victimisation narratives focusing on the past; instead, they transform and work through the past towards a present and future capable of resisting hate crimes. The selected artworks foster cosmopolitan values essential to combating hatred and xenophobia, such as connectedness, integrity, diversity, understanding, inclusion and humanity. By focusing on elementary *acts of kindness*, such as sharing a cup of coffee, they aim to remind participants of essential things we often forget: social moments together, the pleasure of enjoying coffee, and the fragile peace we sometimes take for granted. Indeed, besides their larger objectives, encouraging kindness is one of the meaningful changes that selected arts initiatives aim to inspire:

[...] He [a soldier who participated in the veteran project] made this cake. He made the cake and he just walked in and goes, 'well, I couldn't come here and not bring a cake.' But this is how we connect. We've passed all the culture of cake making to this bloke who rolled up his sleeves and laid the cake in his house. But this is how we affect each other. You know, this is how we have an impact on each other. It's not about always having to make the big decisions to stand up for what you believe sometimes it's about doing this *act of kindness*. Which connect us and shows are actually we understand something about each other. It was really beautiful. [Sue Moffat, director of MTYOL]

The audiences interpreted the encoded content in much the same way as artists intended.

According to Hall (1973), that would mean that decoding was *dominant*: accepted just as the sender intended. In some cases, the decoded discourse was *negotiated*, meaning that the participants and spectators acknowledged the message but reinterpreted it. For example, in addition to the reference to Srebrenica, some respondents mentioned the *Balkan genocide*. In this research, the author did not encounter instances of *oppositional* decoding, where participants understood but rejected the intended message. However, respondents noted that such cases did occur. The challenge of capturing these perspectives, therefore, limits the

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study. As mentioned in the introduction and the methodology section, the audiences interviewed were very particular, especially the ŠTO TE NEMA audience, which consisted mainly of the artist's friends, project volunteers and enthusiasts. Some respondents' interpretations went beyond the outcomes proposed by Hall (*dominant, negotiated and oppositional*) as the audience created their own alternative meanings. For instance, some 8372 participants reflected on the Rwanda genocide or referred to Latin American coffee, slavery and colonialism. As most of the participants and spectators interviewed were open-minded, educated and had values similar to those of the artists, they understood very well what the authors were trying to say and why genocide prevention is necessary. It remains unclear how ordinary passers-by unfamiliar with the Srebrenica genocide would respond to ŠTO TE NEMA or how participants and spectators of 8372 and MTYOL might react if they were not art and theatre professionals and/or enthusiasts. This gap has been partly addressed through respondent comments on general audience reactions; however, future studies might consider using audience focus groups. In ŠTO TE NEMA case, such an approach was impossible, as the nomadic monument ended several years ago, and in other cases, audience members were rarely spontaneous participants.

Although both conventional and non-conventional forms of commemoration focus on remembering human loss, the selected non-conventional artistic forms operate more intimately. Alternative practices are designed to attract diverse audiences and be accessible to all, despite their background and prior knowledge. They engage viewers and participants emotionally, making the genocide and grief relatable through the universal experience of loss and death. To be precise, artists re-semanticise the coffee ritual to convey the sense of absence at the coffee cup, thereby addressing the Srebrenica genocide. It is difficult to comprehend what it means to lose a dear person or an entire family in a genocide; however, every person has experienced personal loss, and that pain can resonate with, or at least bring

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closer, to the experience of genocide survivors. Therefore, these initiatives facilitate engagement with audiences differently from traditional, top-down forms of commemoration, offering a genuinely participatory or highly engaged experience. In these initiatives, the experience of participation is crucial. While the artworks reflect on the past and the memory of genocide, they simultaneously create new memories for participants, making the past more relatable and enduring. Such an experience is well-remembered as it passes through the emotional level. This approach proves more impactful than traditional exhibitions and museums, which, though they also evoke emotions and offer meaningful experiences, do not reach the same depth of engagement. These selected art initiatives demonstrate the potential of empowering participants and spectators, fostering awareness through active human connections, which is impossible in conventional remembrance. Alternative commemorative art and memory activist initiatives have the potential to impact and reshape well-established memory practices and memorialisation in a way that would make remembrance more effective and meaningful rather than obligation, especially once the survivors who share living history pass away. Finally, the selected works, particularly ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL, bring a sense of hope to the Srebrenica genocide memory landscape. Beyond remembrance, they offer empowerment and a commitment to standing against hate.

While 8372 was more accessible to small academic and art professional circles in Ljubljana, Slovenia (and later in Osijek, Croatia), ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL aimed to generate broader, transnational access for remembering the Srebrenica genocide. Starting as a one-day and one-time performance in Baščaršija in Sarajevo, BiH, Aida Šehović transformed ŠTO TE NEMA into a nomadic living monument, erected each year (between 2006 and 2020) in a different city square with the help of the local Bosnian community, volunteers and participants. Although the project's era as a travelling monument has ended, the artist continues its legacy in other forms (e.g., exhibitions, educational workshops, film) that seek

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to actively engage diverse communities in practices of genocide remembrance and prevention. Recently, Šehović launched the research project *Cups of Memory* in cooperation with architect Arna Mačkić to challenge the tendentious public memory of the Srebrenica genocide in the Netherlands. She is also working on a permanent monument at the Memorial Centre, a development that raises questions about the shift toward permanence. This evolution suggests a move away from the project's more fluid, evolving form, potentially challenging the original ideas it sought to question. The MTYOL team also aims to broaden accessibility by performing beyond traditional theatre spaces, planning tours across the UK, BiH, and the Balkan region, and broadcasting the play online for a global audience. The play invites local audiences to engage personally with the history of genocide, simultaneously opening a broader international dialogue on memory. Engagement is further extended through the *My Thousand Year Old Challenge* (MTYOC) project, which actively involves policymakers in transforming education on mass atrocities in the UK, incorporating learning about the Srebrenica genocide. MTYOC has already developed and implemented educational kits for pupils, aiming to raise awareness about genocide and promote hate crime prevention. Thus, ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL generate much broader access to the memory and mourning of the Srebrenica genocide than conventional commemoration practices, bridging local and transnational experiences in meaningful ways. In terms of transnationality, Zajc's performances had a similar effect. Although he did not plan them abroad, the artist was invited to Osijek, where the war memory is very much alive. The transnationality of his performances lies in the fact that they speak of the Srebrenica genocide (BiH) in Slovenia and Croatia, bridging national contexts and fostering a regional understanding of shared histories. In the context of widespread genocide denial and even glorification of the crime in Republika Srpska (RS), such initiatives are of enormous importance to challenge antagonist and homogenising narratives by fostering a deeper understanding of what happened to more than

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8,000 mainly Bosniak male population in July 1995. Notably, selected art practices do not seek to assign blame but instead open a space for remembrance of the genocide. In contrast to traditional forms of remembrance, art offers a *pluralist* approach, including various perspectives and personal stories. Nonetheless, they block pathways to genocide denial and hate speech. Raising awareness and actively working toward genocide prevention is crucial in the contemporary world to truly exercise the ‘never forget’ imperative.

Widespread violence, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine and Ukraine, as well as in other areas of conflict, show that commitments to remembrance, international law and justice remain unfulfilled and, too often, betrayed. Meanwhile, art initiatives address human loss and the divisiveness that pits people against each other as ‘universal’ experiences that, though they occur in different places, share the exact nature and should be prevented at all costs, yet continue to recur. Significantly, all three initiatives presented the Srebrenica genocide to audiences/participants that often included *implicated subjects*, individuals who were not directly connected to the genocide itself or even born at the time but are still implicated by the role their country played (or failed to play) in the Bosnian war and subsequent genocide. In a globalised world, this encourages us to recognise our own implications in events unfolding in other countries, whether through media witnessing or through the actions of our governments. Addressing *implicated subjects* may instil a sense of moral responsibility toward such events.

Most importantly, artists tend to genuinely care about memory issues and future prospects, unlike most of those who initiate and lead the traditional commemorations, such as politicians and subordinate institutions. BiH is an evident example of this dynamic: politicians often emphasise the suffering of particular groups to secure votes but rarely invest in efforts toward inclusion and reconciliation among conflicting groups. Meanwhile, artists often actively engage in fostering a deeper understanding of the past and promoting positive change in the

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present. In selected research cases, artists act as concerned citizens and activists striving for a meaningful impact. The MTYOC project and its discussion with policymakers only reinforce this commitment to real change. Despite a very modest budget, ŠTO TE NEMA and MTYOL reached large audiences. While the MTYOL participants were a particular audience, empathetic and already aware of the genocide, ŠTO TE NEMA addressed the general audience in the city squares. Since the nomadic monument had ended before this research began, I could not interview random participants. However, the participants I spoke to confirmed that many random passers-by in the United States came up to ask what was going on, and that is how they found out about the genocide. These art projects are unlikely to influence genocide deniers convinced of their own perceptions, but they may impact those indifferent and unaware of the genocide. Therefore, it would be powerful to see these initiatives travelling to more countries and regions, including places within the Balkans, especially Serbia and RS, that officially do not recognise the Srebrenica genocide and keep minimizing the scale of atrocities. While this would pose challenges due to sensitive political climates, radical approaches, and even the risk of vandalism in RS, in Serbia, specific organisations and initiatives, such as *Women in Black* and some youth organisations, are already fighting for genocide recognition. Combined with these art initiatives, their efforts could significantly contribute to regional dialogue and acknowledgement.

While this dissertation has analysed how alternative commemorative art practises contribute to the local, regional and transnational memory landscape of the Srebrenica genocide, future research could broaden this scope by exploring the phenomenon of non-traditional forms of commemoration expressed through art on a global scale. The suggested methodological framework proved helpful in examining alternative commemorative art and/or memory activist practices that emerged in the Bosnian context. Thus, it would be interesting to examine 1) whether alternative means of commemoration are a universal phenomenon in

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(post-)conflict societies, 2) whether they are more effective in targeting audiences and cultivating the memory of war atrocities and crimes, such as genocide than traditional forms of remembrance, and 3) whether the theoretical and methodological approach I used here for BiH can be applied and verified in other areas of the world that also have experienced/are currently experiencing violence, conflict, and/or genocide. The future project might aim to contribute to the broader debate on local and global historical interconnections by focusing on how memory practices in specific communities resonate within transnational memory and how artists and their artworks shape new narratives and memories.



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# Annexe 1: Interview Release Form for Artists and Creators

## INTERVIEW RELEASE FORM

This form is for the purpose of gaining approval from interviewees for the research project in which the author intends to publish the name, likeness, and/or biographical information in a published thesis as well as publications, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations.

**Project name:** PhD dissertation project on alternative commemorative practices. In particular, the researcher is interested in how non-conventional forms of remembrance narrate, represent and iconise Srebrenica and what meanings they generate.

Interviewer/Researcher: **Rimantė Jaugaitė** (University of Bologna)

Contact info: [rimante.jaugaitė@gmail.com](mailto:rimante.jaugaitė@gmail.com)

Name of person(s) interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing the form below, **you give your permission for the interview/s made during this research project to be recorded and used by the researcher** for scientific and educational purposes, including publications, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations.

By giving your permission, you do not give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold. You can quit the project at any time by contacting the interviewer.

Restriction description (if any):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

☐ **I agree to participate in this interview.**

Interviewee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annexe 2: Consent to Participate in Interview and Research for Anonymous Participants and Spectators

### CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN INTERVIEW AND RESEARCH

**Project name:** PhD dissertation project on alternative commemorative practices. In particular, the researcher is interested in how non-conventional forms of remembrance narrate, represent and iconise Srebrenica and what meanings they generate.

Interviewer/Researcher: **Rimantė Jaugaitė** (University of Bologna)

Contact info: [rimantejaugaitė@gmail.com](mailto:rimantejaugaitė@gmail.com)

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I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- ✓ I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can **withdraw at any time** or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- ✓ I agree to my interview being **audio-recorded**.
- ✓ I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated **confidentially**.
- ✓ I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain **anonymous**. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.
- ✓ I understand that disguised **extracts from my interview may be quoted** in papers, publications, dissertations, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations.

Any other restriction:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewee's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

## Annexe 3: Consent to Participate in Interview and Research for Public Figures (Non-Anonymised Participants and Spectators)

### CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN INTERVIEW AND RESEARCH

**Project name:** PhD dissertation project on alternative commemorative practices. In particular, the researcher is interested in how non-conventional forms of remembrance narrate, represent and iconise Srebrenica and what meanings they generate.

Interviewer/Researcher: **Rimantė Jaugaitė** (University of Bologna)

Contact info: [rimantejaugaitė@gmail.com](mailto:rimantejaugaitė@gmail.com)

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I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- ✓ I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can **withdraw at any time** or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- ✓ I agree to my interview being **audio-recorded**.
- ✓ I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity **may not remain anonymous as I am a public figure**.
- ✓ I understand that disguised **extracts from my interview may be quoted** in papers, publications, dissertations, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations.

Any other restriction:

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Interviewee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee's contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annexe 4: Interview Questions for the Benjamin Zajc (no. 1)**

### **Interview with Benjamin Zajc 8/12/2022**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you come up with the idea of creating performance 8372?  
What was the primary motivation? What did encourage you to create this performance?
3. Did you have any funding? Where did it come from?
4. Can you tell me about the preparation process?
5. Can you tell me more about your performance?
6. Why did you choose coffee?
7. What was happening during the performance?
8. What was the atmosphere?
9. How did the audience feel?
10. How did the audience accept your performance?
11. What was your target audience?
12. Was it popular among the locals?
13. How do you know that you were understood?
14. How about the regional audience? Do you have any plans to travel with 8372?
15. Why is it a one-time performance?
16. Could you comment on the place and time? Whether they are important?
17. What was your intention when launching 8372? Did you expect anything?
18. Did you know about Aida Šehović's performance *Što te nema*?
19. Do you find those works similar?
20. Why do you think coffee became a common denominator in your works?

## **Annexe 5: Interview Questions for Susan Moffat and Aida Salkić Haughton MBE**

### **Interview with the creators of *My Thousand Year Old Land* 24/1/2023**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you come up with the idea of creating *My Thousand Year Old Land*?  
What was the primary motivation? What did encourage you to create this play?
3. Did you have any funding? Where did it come from?
4. Can you tell me about the preparation process?
5. Can you tell me more about this play?
6. Why did you choose coffee?
7. What was happening during the play?
8. What was the atmosphere?
9. How did the audience feel?
10. How did the audience accept your play?
11. What was your target audience?
12. Was it popular among the locals?
13. How do you know that you were understood?
14. How about the regional audience? Do you have any plans to travel with *MTYOL*?
15. Could you comment on the place and time? Whether they are important?
16. What was your intention when launching the play? Did you expect anything?
17. Did you know about Aida Šehović's performance *Što te nema*?
18. Do you find those works similar?
19. Why do you think coffee became a common denominator in your works?



## **Annexe 6: Interview Questions for the Benjamin Zajc (no. 2)**

### **Questions for Benjamin Zajc 24/2/2023**

1. How did you come up with the idea for the 2<sup>nd</sup> performance?
2. How long did it take?
3. Can you tell me more about the process?
4. Could you introduce me to the performance scenario?
5. How did you come up with this particular structure?
6. What was the point of the performance?
7. What was the main message?
8. Was it understandable for the audience?
9. Do you think the people who saw the 1<sup>st</sup> performance saw the #2 one differently than those who saw only the #2?
10. What was the atmosphere?
11. How did you interact?
12. Did you have any particular intention?
13. Can you comment on the objects you used?
14. You performed in English and Slovenian. Did it make any difference?
15. How did you feel about the audience?  
Did all the audiences have the same connection?
16. Why some got the cookies, and some did not?
17. Why did performances take shorter than expected?
18. Can you compare #1 and #2 performances?
19. Did they have the same depth?

20. What were the advantages and disadvantages?
21. What worked and what did not?
22. What would you do differently?
23. Atmosphere of disturbance or relaxation?
24. Was the performance developed enough?
25. What will you do with the remaining coffee?
26. Why did you name the coffee?  
Do you remember those names?  
Why was it important?
27. Did you think everyone managed to relate the story from the coffee grounds to Srebrenica?
28. Do you think the idea was clearly transmitted?
29. Can you tell me more about your grandma's character?  
Why couldn't the coffee be called as her?
30. How did you want the audience to feel?
31. Why did you say somebody always dies when you explained the coffee grounds?
32. DEATH and COFFEE question—can you explain?

## **Annexe 7: Written Questions for the Benjamin Zajc (no. 3)**

### **Questions for Benjamin Zajc 8/5/2023**

33. How was your performance in Osijek different from the previous one(s)?
34. What was the reception in Osijek?
35. Did you get any interesting comments after your performance?
36. How was the atmosphere?
37. How did the audience feel?
38. Do you have any plans to travel more with 8372?
39. Do you think people connected Srebrenica with Croatia's atrocities and war crimes?
40. Why did you choose to use the notion of *massacre* (*pokol*) instead of *genocide*?

## **Annexe 8: Interview Questions for Aida Šehović**

### **Interview with Aida Šehović 18/7/2023**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you come up with the idea of creating ŠTO TE NEMA?  
What was the primary motivation?
3. What was your intention when launching ŠTO TE NEMA?
4. What was the audience reception?
5. How do the victims and survivors see your project?
6. Did you ever face the genocide denial with ŠTO TE NEMA?
7. Why did you choose coffee?
8. In 2012, in an interview with Dženeta [Karabegović], you talked about performing in Belgrade, but it never happened. Why? (2014 Dženeta's article)
9. Why have travels stopped? Didn't the local communities invite you anymore? (2014 Dženeta's article).
10. How did the project develop through the years?
11. Can you tell me more about #ŠtoTeNema initiative? Fildžani stories?
12. Why permanent monument is needed?
13. How is the film production going?
14. Can you tell me about the funding and how it changed over time?
15. Who funds the project now?
16. Why didn't the collaboration with Benjamin Zajc from Slovenia work?

## Annexe 9: Interview Questions for Aida Salkić Haughton MBE

### Additional Interview with Aida Salkić Haughton MBE 3/6/2024 MS Teams

1. Let us start with the very practical questions: our name spelling.
2. Last time, I learned much about Sue but not much about you. May I ask you to **introduce yourself briefly**? What are your activities? What do you do?
3. Do you consider yourself an **activist**? What about Sue?
4. What is your relation with **activism**?
5. What is your connection with ***Remembering Srebrenica***?
6. How did the organisation embrace the **current logo**? What is the story?
7. May I ask you about the **Memorials dedicated to Srebrenica in the UK**? I say that you posted info about the one in Derby.
8. I believe there are many **updates about the play**. I made a timeline, and I would like to check it with you.
9. As I saw, you **went on a tour**, correct?
10. What are your plans for this year?
11. What are your plans for the following year?
12. Why do you always pick **July** for the play?
13. Would it change the meaning if you had it during different periods of the year?
14. Can you tell me about the **funding** of My Thousand Year Old Land?
15. How much do you depend on theatre as the **institution**?
16. I would like to hear your words about the idea of **coffee** in the play. Whose idea was it?
17. Can you tell me more about *My Thousand Year Old Challenge*? When did you start? What is happening now?
18. Does the fact that the play takes place in July not make it more difficult to talk about Srebrenica with pupils?
19. I have a question about the **copyrights of the photos**. Can I use the ones I find on the internet with credited authors?
20. Did the crimes committed in **Palestine** anyhow change your activities?

## **Annexe 10: Interview Questions for *My Thousand Year Old Land* Spectators**

### **Interviews with *My Thousand Year Old Land* Spectators**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you know about the play?
3. What did encourage you to participate?
4. What was happening during the performance?
5. What was the performance like?
6. What was the atmosphere?
7. How did you feel?
8. Could you comment on the place and time? Whether they important?
9. How could you evaluate Haughton's and Moffat's play?
10. How did the audience accept the performance?
11. Do you think it was popular among the locals?
12. What, according to you was the point of *My Thousand Year Old Land*?
13. Do you think the audience understood the play's message?
14. What do you think about Haughton's and Moffat's idea of embracing coffee?
15. What does coffee and its drinking mean to you?
16. Could you share the contact information of other participants?

## Annexe 11: Online Questionnaire for *My Thousand Year Old Land* Spectators

### Reflections about *My Thousand Year Old Land* for PhD research project

I'm Rimantė Jaugaitė, a PhD student enrolled in the **Global Histories, Cultures, and Politics** program (**University of Bologna**) to develop a project on alternative commemorative practices. In particular, I am interested in how non-conventional forms of remembrance narrate, represent and iconise Srebrenica and what meanings they generate. Therefore, I am collecting the thoughts about “My Thousand Year Old Land” to see **how the audience preceived it**.

The questionnaire consist of **18 open questions** and it may take some time to fill them in. You are not obliged to fill them all but **the more you will elaborate, the more grateful I will be.** 🌹

There are no right or wrong answers and I am very curious to know your opinions and impressions on the play.

### Consent to take part in this research

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can **withdraw at any time** or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated **confidentially**.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain **anonymous**. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised **extracts from my answers may be quoted** in papers, publications, dissertations, exhibitions, World Wide Web, and presentations.

☐ I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

**Personal information:** This data will be anonymised.

Name and Surname:

E-mail address

Occupation:

Age:

Home town/city:

Current town/city:

How often do you go to the theatre?

### Coming to see the play

How did you **get to know** about the play?

What did **encourage** you to participate?

### **Knowledge on Bosnian War**

What did you know about the mass atrocities in Bosnia **before** coming to the play?

Did you learn **anything new** from the play? Can you elaborate on this a little more?

### **Performance**

What was **happening** during the performance?

What was the performance like?

What was the **atmosphere**?

Could you comment on the **place** and **time**? Whether were they important?

### **Feelings**

How did you **feel during** the play?

How did you **feel after** the play?

### **Coffee**

What do you think about the idea of embracing **coffee** in the performance?

What does **coffee and its drinking** mean to you?

### **Reception**

How did the **audience accept the performance**?

Do you think it was **popular among the locals**?

What according to you was **the point** of My Thousand Year Old Land?

Do you think the **audience understood the play's message**?

### **Evaluation**

How do you **evaluate the play**?

What **did you like** and what **you did not**?

### **Extra information**

Anything else you would like to add

### **Reaching out other people, who saw the play**

If you know anyone who saw the play, I would be grateful if you could share their contacts, so I could reach them 🌹

### **Submission**

If you are done, submit the answers.

Thank you very much for participating! ❤️

I wish you a great day and if you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me: [rimantejaugaite@gmail.com](mailto:rimantejaugaite@gmail.com)



## **Annexe 12: Interview Questions for 8372 participants**

### **Interviews with 8372 participants**

17. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
18. How did you know about performance 8372?
19. What did encourage you to participate?
20. What was happening during the performance?
21. What was the performance like?
22. What was the atmosphere?
23. How did you feel?
24. Could you comment on the place and time? Whether they important?
25. How could you evaluate Zajc's performance?
26. How did the audience accept the performance?
27. Do you think it was popular among the locals?
28. What, according to you was the point of 8372?
29. Do you think the audience understood Zajc's message?
30. What do you think about Zajc's idea of embracing coffee?
31. What does coffee and its drinking mean to you?
32. Could you share the contact information of other participants?

## **Annexe 13: Interview Questions for *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 participants**

### **Interviews with *Zgodbe kavne usedline*/8372 participants**

II part of 8372 (7 February 2023)

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you know about the performance?
  - a. Did you participate in another Zajc's performance last year?
3. What did encourage you to participate?
4. What was happening during the performance?
5. What was the performance like?
6. What was the atmosphere?
7. How did you feel?
8. Could you comment on the place and time? Whether they important?
9. How could you evaluate Zajc's performance?
10. How did the audience accept the performance?
11. Do you think it was popular among the locals?
12. What according to you was the point of *Zgodbe kavne usedline*/8372?
13. Do you think the audience understood the message?
14. What do you think about Zajc's idea of embracing coffee?
15. What does coffee and its drinking mean to you?
16. What it means in Slovenia? Is it any different from the region?
17. Could you share the contacts of other participants?

## **Annexe 14: Interview Questions ŠTO TE NEMA participants**

### **Interviews with ŠTO TE NEMA participants**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How did you know about ŠTO TE NEMA?
3. What did encourage you to participate?
4. What was happening during ŠTO TE NEMA?
5. What was it like?
6. How was the atmosphere?
7. How did you feel?
8. How could you evaluate Šehović's project?
9. How did the audience accept it?
10. Do you think it was popular among the locals?
11. What, according to you, was the point of ŠTO TE NEMA?
12. Do you think the audience understood the message?
13. What do you think about Šehović's idea of embracing coffee?
14. What does coffee and its drinking mean to you?
15. What does it mean in Bosnia? Is it any different from the region?
16. Could you share the contacts of other participants?

## Annexe 15: Reconstructing *My Thousand Year Old Land's* Stage Representations and Connecting Them to the Sources of Inspiration

Stage Representations	Inspiration
Pre-show elements: Reading the victims' names	<p>Yad Vashem's practice of reading Holocaust victims' names [?]</p> <p><u>Clarification by Aida Haughton (AH):</u> Every year all the names are read on 11<sup>th</sup> July in Srebrenica and in many other places. We wanted to "rescue the names" from the pile of bones and re-humanise all the killed people so that they are not just a number. <i>Rescuing the Names</i> is the name of our workshop and interactive toolkit we developed together with Caroline Sturdy Colls and the Centre for Archaeology, Staffordshire University. During pandemic we gave people lists of names and asked them to write them up and they did amazing decorations and writing, lit some candles, drew flowers, etc. which we used in our video <i>A Song for BiH</i>, <a href="https://youtu.be/y9LW9XWyxAk?feature=shared">https://youtu.be/y9LW9XWyxAk?feature=shared</a></p>
<b>Prologue</b>	
Stepping into each other's footsteps to avoid the mines and visit a property in the mountains	<p>Stasha's story (this is what author understood from the interviews, especially with SD)</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> EVERYBODY'S STORY, mine fields are still present in BiH</p>
Cleaning up war-ravaged housing and telling stories about life in BiH before the war ( <i>the lost heaven</i> ), presenting the facts and covering war events, their impact	<p>Bosnian, who survived the war and remember Yugoslav times</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> MIRSAD SOLAKOVIC, AUTHOR OF [THE BOOK] 'THE BOY WHO SAID NOTHING' [2018]</p>
Singing lullabies ( <i>Majka sina u gori rodila</i> )	<p>the Mothers</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> This is something that every mother does to her child, sign of love and protection <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IiyUXIFuHc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IiyUXIFuHc</a></p>
<b>Opening</b>	
Coffee scene (grinding, drinking coffee, telling stories and jokes, reading the cups)	<p>Stories of Aida, Katarina, Stasha, Sue and others.</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> YES, COFFEE IS A BIG PART OF A BOSNIAN CULTURE AND WE HAD TO INCLUDE IT.</p>
<b>Following Scenes</b>	
Possible romantic story	<p>Accompanied by <b>the romantic song</b> (<i>sevdalinka Zarasle su staze ove</i>) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IiyUXIFuHc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IiyUXIFuHc</a></p> <p><u>The hyperlink provided by AH above:</u> If you translate the words, you will get the meaning...</p>

<b>Corn party</b> — <i>a girl meets a boy</i> (or anyone, romantically) <b>(NEW scene)</b>	<p>Moffat heard about it and did some research on it.</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> I told her about this old tradition, but I never went as the war started, so we spoke to many people back home and realised it was a very popular event where a boy could meet a girl. During this research, I learned that this is how my mum and dad did it too, only my dad made sure the corn they would break was perfect—just to make sure no corns are broken off. It used to be the social event of the year almost. Some people didn't mind walking to and from—some walked 40 km one way.</p>
<b>Rooster scene</b> → remembering brave father through personal items found	<p>The story of Dževa Avdić and others who lost their family members.</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> yes, rooster story is my dad's (my dad is still alive, but the rooster sadly isn't)</p>
<b>The House of the Mothers:</b> sharing painful memories, they drink coffee too (grinding and talking as therapy), making the Srebrenica flower, supporting and helping each other	<p>the Mothers and impressions of those who visited them.</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> yes, also the words they speak are their statements shared with us directly.</p>
<b>Police taking sides and intimidating victims (voice audio)</b>	<p><u>AH clarification (the author struggled to understand this part well, so AH explanations was crucial):</u> Police Officer Peter Rigby's story, who joined <i>Remembering Srebrenica</i> group in 2019 to visit the Mothers. We had 2 police officers with us at the time and this is what all of us witnessed, but they pointed it out. So, we had to include it as the Mothers did tell us there and then that 'they [police] want us to know that they know' what they are doing at all times. Just listen to the recording again, we were sitting on the balcony of the Mother's house when the police car started to drive past slowly, up and down the road, looking at us. At first, we thought they wish to say 'hi' as we already spoke to some nice police officers in Sarajevo the day before, but soon it became apparent that this was a sign of intimidation—that they are looking closely what is going on at the Mother's house and that they are watching they closely. Mothers were aware of this and confirmed that intimidation happens very often from general members of public but police ignores it... certainly never finds perpetrators (stones were thrown at them, pigs heads left at the cemetery, etc.).</p>
<b>Sarajevo welcome scene</b>	<p>How Sue sees BiH.</p> <p><u>AH clarification:</u> YES, her personal experiences.</p>
<b>Voting for freedom in 1990</b>	AH's story
<b>Ramadan and Bairam—festive calendar</b>	Stories of Aida, Stasha and Katerina

<b>Women taking men's jobs and activities because the men were slaughtered—their <i>absence of presence</i> is transmitted through their belongings. Slaughters across North-East Bosnia interrupt holidays</b>	Stories of survivors, Sue's research  <u>AH clarification:</u> accompanied by sevdalinka <a href="#">Kad procvatu behari</a>
<b>Children's war experiences:</b> playing and writing diaries during bombing and sniper attacks	<u>AH clarification:</u> Children diaries from Sarajevo and a letter from a 12-year-old from Bihać following the first bombing of Bihać and killing of 4 girls in the end. Maida died not long after and her friend wanted to address those who sent those bombs...
<b>Cultural resistance (voice audio) (NEW scene) and Miss Besieged Sarajevo competition (NEW scene)</b>	War photographer Paul Lowe's story and speech of Miss Sarajevo Inela Nogić  <u>AH additional remark:</u> U2 song, Miss Sarajevo
<b>Children's war experiences continue:</b> attacks in the market	Children diaries from Sarajevo
<b>Puppet story: Professor Šahin Šišić's puppet made from the on the stage items, experiencing the Sarajevo siege and doing the best he can (NEW scene)</b>  <b>Mourning the dear family member through items (via sevdalinka <i>Moj Dilbere</i>) (NEW scene)</b>	Filmmaker Šahin Šišić's story  <u>AH clarifications:</u> Šahin Šišić is the author of <a href="#">Planet Sarajevo</a> filmed during the war/ <i>Moj Dilbere</i> sevdalinka  Showing compassion towards animals in the midst of the war. Humanity is not dead.
<b>Children's war experiences continue:</b> losing 12-year-old friends during the attacks, appealing to the children of the <i>other side</i> to prevent their parents from killing	Children's diaries and letters (Bihać, <u>AH clarifies</u> )
<b>Presenting the tragic fate of Srebrenica → women sharing experiences about burying their dear ones; playing Kada's mourning song (voice audio)/women mourning</b>	Women of Srebrenica and The Mothers Kada Hotić's and Munira Subašić's words  <u>AH additional remark:</u> Supporting each other
<b>Social haunting and mass graves, dismantling Srebrenica flower, preparing for shadow theatre scene</b>	Stories of survivors <u>AH clarification:</u> Excerpts from Mirsad Solakovic's book, Tomašica poem
<b>'Never again'—shadow theatre Republika Srpska denying and hiding war crimes/ Presenting personal items found in the mass graves and highlighting that many remains are missing</b>	Facts and Forensic Archaeology  <u>AH additional remark:</u> and work of police investigators, Howard Tucker being one of them
<b>Closing up (updated scene)</b>	
<b>Coming back to the House of the Mothers:</b> remaking Srebrenica flower again/ Mothers ready to host guests and share their stories/ Drinking coffee together/ the land belongs to everyone who loves it (the Mothers set grave/evidence markers referring to forensic archaeology exhumations)/ message of hope, truth and justice	The Mothers and their stories

## **Annexe 16: Artistic Intentions and Encoded Meanings**

Please access the online Annexe 16 through this link:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bSWvikbMrsxmglukZvicKMdVkSwRV5OR/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Due to the extensive size of the categorised interview fragments, I decided to store these large annexes on [Google Drive](#). This approach ensures easy access without overburdening the dissertation with large files and allows me to maintain control over the data. By managing the annexes externally, I can respond to any requests from participants to withdraw or modify their data, following ethical guidelines. If, for some reason, the link no longer works, please contact me personally via email: [rimante.jaugaite2@unibo.it](mailto:rimante.jaugaite2@unibo.it) or [rimantejaugaite@gmail.com](mailto:rimantejaugaite@gmail.com)

## **Annexe 17: ŠTO TE NEMA audience interpretations**

Please access the online Annexe 17 through this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xscLw\\_x6\\_D4LwBAkU\\_8p9FMOWiox4DTv/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xscLw_x6_D4LwBAkU_8p9FMOWiox4DTv/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true)

## **Annexe 18: *My Thousand Year Old Land* audience interpretations**

Please access the online Annexe 18 through this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_OL5n3BuOaTHZaku8bi\\_asS3qxeOhd95/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_OL5n3BuOaTHZaku8bi_asS3qxeOhd95/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true)

## **Annexe 19: 8372, *Stories of Coffee Grounds*/8372 (Ljubljana) and 8372/ IV (Osijek) audience interpretations**

Please access the online Annexe 19 through this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/12hZ1Ty0dwmocmPeivA6vjCh\\_c1hCp5v5/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12hZ1Ty0dwmocmPeivA6vjCh_c1hCp5v5/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109164770579642942143&rtpof=true&sd=true)