



Memory (Re)cycling: The Pilgrimage to Vukovar Remembrance Day

Research Article

Ana Ljubojević

Marie Skłodowska Curie Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Graz, Austria

ana.ljubojevic@uni-graz.at

Contemporary Southeastern Europe, 2022, 8(2), 105-123

10.25364/02.8:2021.2.6



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Memory (Re)cycling: The Pilgrimage to Vukovar Remembrance Day

Ana Ljubojević*

This paper is based on an ethnographic study carried out during the Zagreb-Vukovar cycling marathon to the Remembrance Day commemoration. The commemoration of the fall of Vukovar, one of the key elements of the Croatian narrative of the Homeland War, attracts thousands of people from all over Croatia each year. I analyse the social production of the memory of the fall of Vukovar, a town which experienced some of the worst destruction during the 1991-1995 war. As a result, this paper assesses the interaction of various arenas of memory present in Vukovar, such as political and official discourse, commemoration, popular culture and historical narrative. Of particular interest is the relationship between individual and collective memory, belonging and space.

Keywords: collective memory, Southeastern Europe, pilgrimage, victimhood

Introduction

The destruction of the town of Vukovar was one of the most violent episodes of the 1991-1995 war in Croatia. The commemoration of the fall of Vukovar, the Day of Remembrance, is dedicated to the memory of 18 November 1991, when the Yugoslav People's Army entered the devastated town after a three-month siege. Having acquired ever stronger symbolical power over the years, since 2019 the fall of Vukovar has been officially memorialised as a national public holiday, as opposed to its previous status of a memorial day.¹ Each year the commemoration service on the Day of Remembrance in the town of Vukovar attracts tens of thousands of participants from all over Croatia. The number of people paying respect to the war-torn town, as well as the diversity of means and expressions of related mnemonic rituals, triggered some of the questions elaborated in this paper: first of all, why do people need to take part in mnemonic practices, especially those requiring a certain degree of physical and mental effort? Second, what kind of memories are negotiated, challenged and adopted before, during and after the commemorations?

This paper's aim is to approach collective memory from the perspective of spatial mobility engagement and the perceptions of people visiting commemorative events and monuments dedicated to war events, of both civil and military background. In particular, my research is based on an ethnographic study

* Ana Ljubojević is a Marie Curie fellow at the CSEES, University of Graz, Austria. Previously, she was a EURIAS postdoctoral fellow at the Polish Institute of Advanced Studies (PIAST) in Warsaw and a NEWFELPRO postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for the Study of Ethnicity, Citizenship and Migration (CEDIM), Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, Croatia. She obtained her PhD in Political systems and institutional change at the Institute for Advanced Studies Lucca, Italy. She has conducted research on the mechanisms of transitional justice in Croatia and Serbia and has research interests in memory studies, cultural trauma and social production of memory.

¹ *Zakon o blagdanima, spomendanima i neradnim danima u Republici Hrvatskoj*, 2019. *Narodne novine* 110. 14 November 2019 (accessed: 20 March 2020).

carried out during the Zagreb-Vukovar cycling marathon to the Remembrance Day commemoration. I analyse the impact of grassroots ties of solidarity and belonging on collective memory of the difficult past in Croatia, as well as the social processes through which such memory is produced, performed, and maintained. In doing so, my goal is to trace the social production of memory, and in particular the emotional investment of the visit to the memory site, the appropriation of the official commemorative practices, and the translation of such practices into action.

The first part of this paper explains the theoretical framework of collective memory and associates it with the notions of belonging and solidarity. Thereafter, a brief overview of the historical background of the war in Vukovar is given. Finally, in the analytical part, I present the results of the ethnographic research and draw conclusions on the impact of the place on collective memory making in Vukovar.

Collective memory, belonging and solidarity

Memories of defeat, as much as memories of victory, have not only shaped post-war commemorations and national identities, but also permeated vast spheres of cultural, social and everyday life. Instead of asking *why* the fall of Vukovar is remembered and commemorated, this paper poses the question *how* it is represented and implemented at a grassroots level. By doing so, this research explores circumstances under which a specific place becomes the subject of collective memory,² i.e. how individuals and groups interact with Vukovar as *lieu de mémoire*.³ Moreover, group dynamics and negotiations of belonging and solidarity represent the core of the analysis. In doing so, the resulting micro-ties are inevitably put in relation with both public memory⁴ and the official historical narrative about the war in Vukovar.

The interaction between individual and collective memory⁵ is established and manifested symbolically through a "body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image".⁶ Through this media and related ritual practices, the stories and myths that congeal as collective memory should serve as a foundation upon which collective identity rests. This research observes the interaction between personal, public and official memories and the impact said contacts have on contributing to and/or challenging post-war official narratives.

I begin my research by analysing personal memories, whether lived or transmitted, that motivate individuals to participate to commemoration rituals. Olick and Robbins argue that collective memory is processual: it is not a static category that we own, but a dynamic process in which members of the

² The term "collective memory" refers to the selective and cumulative process through which collectivities, from groups to nations, make use of and create meaningful sense of the past.

³ Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations* 26, 147-69.

⁴ Public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions.

⁵ Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁶ Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka. 1995. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique* 65, 125-33.

community are involved.⁷ By participating in commemorations, an individual confirms his or her belonging to a “mnemonic community”.⁸ Moreover, the repetitiveness of such memorialisation practice draws the lines of the community and reaffirms the group’s collective identity.⁹ Commemorative practices, from the Durkheimian point of view, operate as the nation’s integrative force, and they also mean, symbolise, or express the conscience of the collective and a feeling of togetherness.¹⁰ This performative character of contemporary identity formation processes pays attention to their dynamic character and the frequent adoption of a symbolic repertoire from popular symbolic images, rituals, and sites.¹¹ Scaling down to the everyday life practices, sociologist Erving Goffman outlined ritual as a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and shared reality, which generates solidarity and symbols of group membership. Participation in a ritual creates emotional energy in individuals that is used for forging micro-solidarities, necessary for holding a heterogeneous society together.¹²

Although particular (group and/or individual) identities are salient as a category of practice, a notion of belonging is instead chosen as a response to the analytical shortcomings of the concept of identity.¹³ Belonging captures the relationship between personal identity and collective identity, allowing the inclusion of a “sentimental, cultural, and symbolic dimension in a discussion of what ties a collectivity together”.¹⁴ An important distinction is crucial for the focus of this paper: while identity puts in opposition “us” versus “them”, belonging explains the internal dynamics of inclusion, and emotional in-group attachments too. This paper nevertheless follows theoretical insights from nationalism studies, especially Malešević’s contribution dealing with the envelopment of micro-solidarity networks.¹⁵ This case study of a specific group “attached” to the state sponsored commemoration underlines the importance of small-scale, face-to-face interaction from which “human beings derive their emotional fulfilment, comfort and sense of ontological security”.¹⁶

In this research, belonging to places and belonging to groups are considered together, as they are both discursively constructed, negotiated and imagined in

⁷ Olick, Jeffrey K. and Joyce Robbins. 1998. Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, 105-40.

⁸ Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2003. *Calenders and History: A Comparative Study of the Social Organization of National Memory*, in *States of Memory. Continuities, Conflicts and Transformations in National Retrospection*, edited by Olick, Jeffrey K, Adams, Julia and George Steinmetz. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 315-37.

⁹ Olick and Robbins, *Social Memory Studies*.

¹⁰ Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.

¹¹ Fox, Jon E. and Cynthia Miller-Idriss. 2008. Everyday Nationhood. *Ethnicities* 8(4), 536-63.

¹² Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

¹³See for example: Probyn, Elspeth. 1996. *Outside Belongings*. New York and London: Routledge; Fortier, Anne-Marie. 2000. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity*. Oxford: Berg; Sicakkan, Hakan. G. and Yngve Lithman. 2005. *Theorising Identity Politics, Belonging Modes and Citizenship*, in *Changing the Basis of Citizenship in the Modern State: Political Theory and the Politics of Diversity*, edited by Sicakkan, Hakan G. and Yngve Lithman. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 197-226; Jones, Paul, and Michał Krzyżanowski. 2011. *Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing ‘Others’*, in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, edited by Delanty, Gerard, Wodak, Ruth and Paul Jones. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 38-53.

¹⁴ Sicakkan and Lithman, *Theorising Citizenship*, 8.

¹⁵ Malešević, Siniša. 2019. *Grounded Nationalisms: A Sociological Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶ Malešević, *Grounded Nationalisms*, 37

similar ways, even though they often have a certain basis in 'reality', territoriality and the like. Boundaries, too, embrace various levels of abstraction: they literally divide territories on the ground; set limits that mark social groups from each other; and provide a template for that which separates different categories of the mind.¹⁷

Finally, the post-conflict environment and remembrance of "violence imposed on a place [bear] not only the implicit challenge to the identities associated with it, but also [...] [provoke] responses intimately related to a well-developed sense of place".¹⁸ Consequently, the place has the power "to direct and stabilise us, to memorialise and identify us, to tell us who and what we are in terms of *where we are* (as well as where we are not)".¹⁹

Historical background and legacy of the *Homeland War* in Vukovar

From the summer of 1991, the town of Vukovar, situated in the very eastern part of Croatia, was under siege for three months and was subject to constant shelling led by the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija* - JNA), members of the Territorial Defence (*Teritorijalna obrana* - TO), and various paramilitary units from Serbia.²⁰ On 18 November 1991, Vukovar fell, or, according to the Serbian sources of the time, "was liberated."²¹ Vukovar underwent some of the worst destruction during the *Homeland War*, as the 1991-1995 war is called in Croatia.²² Said label has entered public discourse and memory and is widely used and accepted, being rarely challenged.²³ Moreover, its routine use is not at all surprising nor unexpected in Croatia, as any ideological component is polished away by the syntagma's everyday use. The official historical narrative of the *Homeland War*, according to Dejan Jović, is "easier to neglect and ignore than to openly question".²⁴ This narrative has two main identity elements: it depicts the country as a proud victim of senseless Serbian aggression, and as a hero who subsequently won the war. Moreover, it situates the town of Vukovar at a central place of Croatian victimhood in the war, in that it symbolises the Croatian *Homeland War* and suffering.

¹⁷ Barth, Fredrik. 2000. *Boundaries and Connections*, in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Identities*, edited by Cohen, Anthony. London: Routledge, 17-36.

¹⁸ Povržanović Frykman, Maja. 2002. Violence and the Re-discovery of Place. *Ethnologia Europaea* 32(2), 69-88.

¹⁹ Casey, Edward S. 1993. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

²⁰ Meaning the territory of one of the SFRY's six constituent republics, corresponding to the present Republic of Serbia, which was from 1992 to 2006 the main power element in the states of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia and Montenegro. I will use the term Serbia in order to overcome possible ambiguities.

²¹ For example, the daily *Politika* or the national broadcasting agency RTS.

²² The name *Homeland War* carries a strong link with the struggle for the independence that Croatia obtained during the war, but also implies the defensive nature of the conflict, led in order to safeguard the homeland.

²³ What is sometimes questioned is the nature of the war, namely whether it was a civil war, defensive or aggression (referring to the Croatian intervention in BiH from 1992 to 1994).

²⁴ Jović, Dejan. 2012. The War That Is Not Allowed to Be Forgotten: Nationalist Discourse on the 'Homeland War' (1991-1995) in Contemporary Croatia. *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* 3, 52-69.

The focus on victimhood in commemoration practices has become a broader, European post-Second World War trend, noticeable not only in the context of framing defeats and military losses. Representations of cultural memory, particularly those of traumatic events, became fertile soil for "wars of memory"²⁵ in attempts to frame the history of the Second World War. Moreover, the process of the "universalisation of the Holocaust"²⁶ and subsequent development of human rights as European values brought "a change in the focus of remembrance: the figure of the hero-martyr [...] has been replaced by the victim".²⁷

Similarly, the memorialisation of the Homeland War in Vukovar follows a victim-oriented approach, since the town holds an important place in the official institutional remembering of the past. Up until 1998, when the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) finished its mandate and Croatia regained its current territory and borders, the commemoration of the fall of Vukovar was held outside of the town, in Zagreb, Đakovo or Osijek. Most of the political speeches, given either by the local government in exile or political elites at the national level, focused on the exiled population (*prognanici*) and offered hope and promises for an eventual return to Vukovar. The political elites described the siege and battle for Vukovar in such a way that the town seemed almost like a sacral victim, whose sacrifice was made for the good of the Croatian nation: "words fail to express gratitude to Vukovarians for everything they did for Croatia."²⁸ Moreover, the symbolic value of Vukovar for the official historical narrative was often underlined: "Vukovar was a test for Croatian history", without which "there would not be a contemporary Croatia."²⁹ The military loss was also presented as a moral victory, where "the town was lost, but Croatia was gained"³⁰ in a "miraculous ninety days' resistance of Croatian defenders against a much more powerful enemy."³¹ Finally, Vukovar was placed outside of the local and national context as a "warning to the world – the same one which, if only it had recognised Greater Serbia's aspirations, could have saved many lives in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina."³²

Until 1999, political speeches at the commemorations were given before the public; such a practice ceased in the 2000s after some veterans' organisations protested against the use of speeches for political campaigns. However, most political statements given to the media addressed the war in Vukovar in its totality and cite "thousands [that] were forcefully expelled from their homes and

²⁵ Welzer, Harald. (ed.). 2007. *Der Krieg der Erinnerung. Holocaust, Kollaboration und Widerstand im europäischen Gedächtnis*. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer.

²⁶ Eckel, Jan and Claudia Moisel. (eds.). 2008. *Universalisierung des Holocaust? Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik in internationaler Perspektive*. Göttingen: Wallstein.

²⁷ Radonić, Ljiljana. 2017. Post-Communist Invocation of Europe: Memorial Museums' Narratives and the Europeanization of Memory. *National Identities* 19(2), 269-28.

²⁸ Statement of the mayor of Osijek Zlatko Kramarić, in N.N. 1993. Grad junak. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 November 1993.

²⁹ Statement of the general Bobetko, in: N.N. 1994. Vukovar se vraća kući. *Večernji list*, 19 November 1994.

³⁰ Statement of Branko Borković - Mladi Jastreb in : N.N. 1994 Nema Hrvatske bez Vukovara. *Vjesnik*, 19 November 1994.

³¹ Statement of mayor of Vukovar Jure Kolak in: Đikić, Ivica. 1995. Živimo za povratak! *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 19 November 1995.

³² Jadranka Kosor, envoy of the President Tuđman, in: Đikić, *Živimo za povratak*.

sent to detention camps."³³ 18 November 1991 is underlined as "the day when the international system of humanitarian law broke down",³⁴ when the local population was left to "Serbian criminals,"³⁵ when "Serbia was defeated, Europe died and Croatia rose from the ashes".³⁶

Similarly, "the fall of Vukovar," as 18 November was first labelled, gave space to an ever more frequent "Day of Remembrance" wording, in order to avoid direct reminiscence of the defeat and to provide a more heroic and victorious version of the event. Such a change was the result of the solidification of the official politics of remembrance, especially when, in 1999, the Croatian Parliament proclaimed 18 November to be the *Day of Remembrance of the Victim of Vukovar*. The very title and the deliberate use of the singular personify the sacral place that was sacrificed so Croatia could have a better future. Hence, Vukovar became *lieu de mémoire*, not only from the institutional point of view, but also in the sphere of culture and everyday life. Moreover, in 1999, the tradition of the so-called Memory column was established: a procession passing various memory sites, from the Vukovar hospital to the Memorial Cemetery of the Victims of the Homeland War.

However, there are alternative narratives that contradict or relate to the existing official narrative of the war. The faith of missing persons and civilian victims of war is often a trigger of heated debates: the Serbian minority demands justice for civilian victims killed before the fall of the town, while some members of the Croatian majority oppose the official commemoration as a sign of protest for the still unknown faith of their loved ones. In addition, since 2013 there have been major divides within the ethnic Croatian population due to the anti-Cyrillic protests that were triggered by the implementation of Croatian minority rights legislation.³⁷ This almost year-long crisis of minority rights and the introduction of the Serbian language and writing in official use culminated in November 2013 in the commemoration for the Day of Remembrance. Members of the Croatian government, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps, were present in front of the Vukovar hospital at the beginning of the commemorative programme, but the protesters, gathered around the so-called *Headquarters for the Defence of Croatian Vukovar (Stožer za obranu hrvatskog Vukovara)* blocked them from leading the Memory Walk.³⁸ Such a division between "the people" vs. "the elite", or in the words of the protesters, between "Vukovarian" and "non-Vukovarian" Croatia, brought a strong ideological (as opposed to ethnic) component into discussion on the memory of the war in Vukovar and the political use of this memory.

³³ Letter of the Vice-President of the Government Kostović to the general Klein: Kostović, Ivica. 1996. Dan jecaja i plača, a ne pjesama i truba. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 November 1996.

³⁴ Statement of Mladi Jastrebović, in: N.N. 1998. Vukovar se diže iz pepela. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 19 November 1998.

³⁵ N.N., *Vukovar se diže iz pepela*.

³⁶ Statement of the Vukovar mayor Štengl in: N.N. 1999. Godišnjica pada Vukovara - kad će zločinci pred sud? *Vjesnik*, 19 January 1999.

³⁷ Ljubojević, Ana. 2016. *Speak Up, Write Out: Language and Populism in Croatia*, in *Narratives of Identity in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, edited by Hancock, Landon E. Bradford: Emerald Group, 29-55.

³⁸ The author attended the commemoration.

Methodology

From 15 to 18 November 2015, I participated in the cycling marathon from Zagreb to Vukovar and conducted (informal) interviews with 23 participants of the initiative. Moreover, I observed intergroup dynamics during the trip, and visited places of memory with around 35 participants of the marathon. The participants were mostly men (roughly 85%) aged between 24 and 72. There were also 5 women (myself included) aged 34 to 42. Most of the cyclists had close links to the 1991-1995 war, either as actors/war veterans,³⁹ spouses, children or friends of the “defenders” (*branitelji*). Seven participants were from Vukovar, some came as far as from Sinj or Gračac, while the largest number was from Zagreb and surroundings.

I must outline my own position within the marathoners' group, not only as a female researcher – “outsider” to the core cycling community – but also as a citizen of Serbia. While the only comment of the organisers to my expression of interest to join the marathon and conduct research was that the club cannot commit any participant to respond to my questions (which, of course, I never asked them to do), my country of origin came as surprise and challenge to the organisers.⁴⁰ However, as I was told later during the marathon, the organisers were convinced that “a girl joining a cycling marathon on her own, willing to suffer and cycle more than 300km, cannot have any bad intentions.”⁴¹ Finally, even though I spoke *ijekavica*, the Croatian variant of the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language group, my accent clearly belongs to Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina.⁴² Consequently, although I was often asked for my birthplace, nobody asked about my ethnic origin.

I spoke at least half an hour with each informant, usually while cycling. As the peloton was escorted by the police, we rode two by two in a row, which facilitated conversation and guaranteed privacy from the rest of the group. I covered a wide range of topics with the informants: personal memories of war, the experience of war and peace, their motivation for participating in the marathon, their reasons for attending the commemoration in Vukovar, and what Vukovar meant to them.

On the road...

The Zagreb-to-Vukovar cycling marathon is organised every year since 2012 by the Voluntary Cycling Organisation “Potepuh” (*Dobrovoljno biciklističko društvo*, DBD) following their mission to cycle along “the roads of suffering and victory” (*putevima patnje i pobjede*).⁴³ The idea of acting “to remember the heroes and victims of the Homeland War and never forget”⁴⁴ was realised after the

³⁹ War veterans in Croatia are called *branitelji* (meaning “defenders”). This is an official title sanctioned by law for soldier-participants in the Homeland War.

⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, while having a Croatian residence, the only ‘administrative’ form where I needed to provide information regarding my birthplace and citizenship was the one relating to additional health insurance once the participation quota had already been signed and paid. Once that information was provided, I was actually asked why I had not previously outlined my origin.

⁴¹ Personal interview VU20.

⁴² The province of Vojvodina, ethnically the most heterogeneous part of Serbia, is the region where most Serbian Croats live.

⁴³ Statute of the DBD Potepuh, 2012.

⁴⁴self-description of the club on their Facebook page (accessed on 26/2/2019):

acquittal of Croatian generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia,⁴⁵ an event that strengthened the official Homeland War narrative. Moreover, the time that had passed since the fall of the town, triggered an additional need for conserving the memory and educating the generation that did not actively participate in the 1991-1995 war.

The pre-commemoration cycling marathon hence represents the convergence point between the temporal and the spatial dimension. The journey from Zagreb to Vukovar embodies not only physical displacement from point A to point B, but incorporates the symbolic *space* related to the specific site of memory. In addition, the marathon is also a form of mnemonic practice, operating by definition on a *time* scale while putting in relation the past and the present, i.e. by making sense of the past in the present moment.

Since 2015, the cycling marathon is held under the patronage of the then-President of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović,⁴⁶ who supported the idea of "remembering victims fallen during the siege and after the occupation of the town of Vukovar" while also "remembering the great *suffering of the town of Vukovar during the Homeland War*" (emphasis added).⁴⁷ In 2017 and 2018, Grabar-Kitarović again underlined the "victim and suffering of the town of Vukovar and its inhabitants" and labelled the marathon "an occasion for the promotion of patriotic and sport values, while remembering decisive moments of the Homeland War, and the sacrifice of exceptional and brave people for the protection of Croatian freedom".⁴⁸ Just like the narrative on the Day of Remembrance, the town of Vukovar in the president's message not only gained priority over its inhabitants, but it was successfully politicised and used as a unifying factor for "the patriots" as well. Moreover, the notion of freedom was framed as something special, unique and Croatian.

In addition, the cycling marathon is regularly sponsored by the Ministry of Interior, which escorts the peloton during the entire ride and provides logistics along the way. The 330km tour is divided into three stages, while accommodation and food is provided by the local schools or firefighters' facilities. Therefore, the economic condition for participating to the marathon is quite affordable,⁴⁹ as it depends mostly on participants' willingness to invest time and determination to cycle in the often challenging weather conditions typical for mid-November. Along the way, the cyclists pay visits to local veterans' associations and monuments erected in remembrance of the Homeland War, in the towns of Kutina and Novska and in a number of villages in Slavonia region. Finally, on

https://www.facebook.com/pg/dobrovoljno.biciklisticko.drustvo.potepuh/about/?ref=page_internal

⁴⁵ Said generals were indicted and convicted in the first instance trial for war crimes in the Knin region. Their subsequent acquittal was interpreted by political elites, the mainstream media and a majority of the population as the acquittal of Croatia and consequently the Croatian nation.

⁴⁶ Before taking over the presidency, Grabar-Kitarovic was a member of the largest right-wing party in Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ).

⁴⁷ Letter of the President to DBD Potepuh, 14/10/2014, classified under the number 053-02/15-0/478.

⁴⁸ Letter of the President to DBD Potepuh, 28/09/2017, classified under the number 053-02/17-03/551. The 2018 version is identical to that of 2017.

⁴⁹ It corresponded to less than 2% of the average monthly gross earnings in Croatia: Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske. 2016. *Prosječne mjesečne isplaćene neto plaće zaposlenih za prosinac 2015* (accessed: 23 September 2021).

18 November, the Day of Remembrance, a group visit to places of suffering and memory sites is organised, stopping at Vukovar Hospital, the Croatian Documentary Memorial Centre of the Homeland War (*Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata*), the Memorial Home of Croatian Defenders at Trpinja Street (*Spomen dom hrvatskih branitelja na Trpinjskoj cesti*), the Memorial Cemetery of the Victims of the Homeland War (*Memorijalno groblje žrtava iz Domovinskog rata*), Ovčara Memorial Centre (*Spomen dom Ovčara*) and Ovčara Mass Grave Site (*Spomen obilježje masovne grobnice*).⁵⁰ Only the smaller part of the group joined the Memory Column, a 5.5km walk from Vukovar Hospital to Memorial Cemetery, a central event during the commemorative programme in Vukovar.

Creating a community – group solidarity and emotional energy

The research on the social production of memory departs from the analysis of the marathon as a form of interaction ritual.⁵¹ According to the sociologist Randall Collins, there are four main outcomes of interaction rituals: group solidarity, emotional energy in the individual, symbols of social relationship and standards of morality.

Besides the symbolic, Vukovar also carries a strong affective potential that goes beyond local and regional context. When applied to a group level, said potential impacts the creation of bonds of solidarity among participants. The inclination to affirmative action and solidarity of the participants stems *a priori* from their decision to join the three-day journey to Vukovar. Therefore, one of the first questions asked to the marathon participants was their personal motivation to join the ride. Cyclists coming for the first time were curious to see the town and the sites of memory with their own eyes. This authentic experience, very often evoked together with its concurrent alternative, i.e. the official commemorative practice, offered a deeper, multidimensional vision of the town's present-day situation:

"It is a completely different impression [when you visit the town]. I was struck the most with the Ovčara memorial and the hospital. It is all really horrible, but turns out it was all in vain at the end...so many destroyed families from both sides."⁵²

Some cyclists expressed their enthusiasm and their own understanding of the 18 November:

"I would give everything for this town...There is a circle of friends who follow my longing, my joy and my will. We will never forget, but we will always remain gentlemen. This is our special day (praznik)."⁵³

Here, the affective component is related to the collective sharing of emotions and creation of bonds through a common experience. One participant from Vukovar

⁵⁰ Ovčara farm is the place of massacre of more than 200 prisoners in the imminent aftermath of the fall of Vukovar.

⁵¹ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

⁵² Personal interview VU4

⁵³ Personal interview VU5

described his participation as a means for sharing personal stories and experiences of the town with other cyclists:

*"Personally, I don't think that I sacrifice anything nor do I prove anything with this ride, but as a Vukovarian I like to introduce those people to my Vukovar, to take them to the Memorial Cemetery, to Ovčara, to show them the town."*⁵⁴

In all of the cases, the quest for authenticity of the place created emotional attachments to other members of the group, and amplified the sense of solidarity and community:

"Everyone who experiences this trip is not the same person anymore. Two light layers of clothes, an open road and an open heart. Those we did not know now became our friends. Those we met before became our brothers. There is only one Vukovar, and this is one of the ways to truly understand the true tragedy of those people and of the hero town".⁵⁵

Such group dynamics establishing a temporary, idealised order and community was theorised by Victor Turner and debated among pilgrimage studies scholars. According to Turner, individuals leave behind their "relatively fixed state of life and social status and are passing into a liminal or threshold phase and condition for which none of the rules and few of the experiences of their previous existence had prepared them" in order to create an egalitarian bonding within the so-called *communitas*.⁵⁶ Even though the main critiques of *communitas* theory have outlined the sometimes conflicting relationship between different groups of pilgrims, the relatively small size of the observed group and their rather specific identity category happened to produce a strong sense of community, despite the different motivations and aims for participating. The same feeling of unity was confirmed also by the participants originally from Vukovar:

"And then, on Monday we arrived in Vukovar, a hell of a feeling, as if I was there for the first time, it struck me. So I did not go back home to sleep, but instead I stayed that night [in public school] with my friends".⁵⁷

who moreover outlined that "in this moment there is no other place in the world I would rather be than in my Vukovar".⁵⁸

Some participants portrayed the importance of cycling as a transformative semiotic element, rather than a simple means to reach the town: "places of completely negative context are visited with a certain dose of positive thinking achieved through team work",⁵⁹ which gave "a new perspective in peacetime".⁶⁰ Emotional connections and affective investments devoted to the very arrival in Vukovar were also clearly outlined:

⁵⁴ Personal interview VU14

⁵⁵ Personal interview VU19

⁵⁶ Turner, Victor. 1969. *Liminality and Communitas*, in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, edited by Turner, Victor. Chicago: Aldine publishing. 358-374.

⁵⁷ Personal interview VU16

⁵⁸ Personal interview VU13

⁵⁹ Personal interview VU7

⁶⁰ Personal interview VU2

"If it was only for cycling, it would be a real nice ride, but with every extra kilometre the numbers on the monuments were increasing and our hearts were getting bigger".⁶¹

Participants' emotional energy was not solely shaped by the feelings of confidence, elation, strength, or enthusiasm as driving forces of positive in-group dynamics. The understanding of the 1991 events in Vukovar in a wider historical and social context, confronted with the current official memory politics, was done differently by the group members. Therefore, their negative emotional energy, interestingly enough, was not directed towards the enemy party from the war, but towards the political elites, judged to be too opportunistic and instrumental.

For my informants, the central place in the remembrance process was reserved for the human losses. The military and symbolic dimension of the war in Vukovar, remembered through the hegemonic narrative, nevertheless found its echo during the marathon as well. These two narratives do not directly oppose and deny each other; rather they represent the multidirectional characteristics of the collective memory.⁶² Therefore, the cyclists touch upon the symbolic victim of the Town too, with deliberate use of the capital letter, thus reproducing and negotiating the framing of the Croatian Parliament's decision regarding the Vukovar Remembrance Day. The participants were more inclined to embrace Vukovar as a place of suffering: "I am half Slovenian, and precisely for that reason I am glad to organise this trip in order to show the universality of victimhood."⁶³

Nevertheless, the representation of Vukovar as a hero Town was often understood as a way of gaining political points: "the commemoration and the [Memory] Column are too politicised – I care more to pay my respect to the victims".⁶⁴

Symbols of social relationship

According to the theory of interaction, what is mutually focused upon becomes a symbol of the group.⁶⁵ In this sense, the entire town of Vukovar in its materiality can be treated as a "sacred object", a symbol to reach and experience. It is not surprising that going to Vukovar as a "place of special piety"⁶⁶ has particular symbolic weight and attracts above average interest⁶⁷ from participants/cyclists:

"The best possible organisation and the effort would not mean anything if it wasn't for our participants – dear people, cyclists and patriots, who are willing to spend their free time for a higher cause, and ride from Zagreb to Vukovar in low temperatures and adverse weather conditions in order to pay respect to

⁶¹ Personal interview VU2

⁶² Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional memory: remembering the Holocaust in the age of decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

⁶³ Personal interview VU20

⁶⁴ Personal interview VU18

⁶⁵ Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*.

⁶⁶ <https://www.morh.hr/en/news/press-releases/18235-the-vukovar-1991-remembrance-day.html>.

⁶⁷ When compared with other similar organised cycling trips.

Croatian heroes and innocent victims [...] fallen in the 1991 Serbian siege of the hero Town [sic!] and those killed during the occupation".⁶⁸

The organisers address the participants as if they were (Croatian) patriots (despite the occasional presence of participants from abroad) dedicated to a higher cause, i.e. being on a special mission larger than the usual cycling trips (popularly called *biciklijada*) and voluntarily suffering in the cold. Such an explanation is compatible with the definition of pilgrimage "as a journey undertaken by individuals or groups, based on a religious or spiritual inspiration, to a place that is regarded as more sacred or salutary than the environment of everyday life, to seek a transcendental encounter with a specific cult object, for a purpose of acquiring spiritual, emotional or physical healing or benefit".⁶⁹ Combined with a highly performative action like the Vukovar commemoration, the cycling marathon thus represents a "movement within movement [...] that] can provide opportunities to reflect upon, re-embody, sometimes even retrospectively transform, past journeys".⁷⁰

Such a context of the cycling marathon evoked that of a pilgrimage to a sacred place. The symbolic potential of equating Vukovar with the biblical motive of martyrdom is used in a top-down approach of describing and organising the official Day of Remembrance. For example, the commemorative programme held various titles: from biblical connotations such as "White Cross sends a warning" (2003), "Pilgrimage for Croatian freedom" (2006) and "Vukovar – holy name" (2012), to the town that personifies the victim: "Vukovar is Our beautiful, Vukovar is my Croatia" (2008), "Vukovar is yesterday, today and tomorrow" (2009), "Vukovar – winner, because it is a victim" (2010) and "Vukovar – place of special piety" (from 2013 onwards). In addition, the Memory Column is often called *via crucis*, and Vukovar "the hero town, the town of *fallen angels*" (emphasis added).⁷¹

The official insistence on suffering and the heroic victim of Vukovar and its inhabitants, and not on military defeat or political failure,⁷² is the main element of symbolic power of the town as *lieu de mémoire*. I was therefore particularly interested in different ways of framing losses: as a necessary sacrifice for further victory, as a defeat/failure and as a place of suffering. In line with the official framing of Vukovar, nobody really talked about the battle of Vukovar as a defeat and much less as a failure.

Therefore, even though army members defending Vukovar⁷³ were often invoked and recalled, their courage and resistance was put in the context of sacrifice and

⁶⁸ Facebook page of the DBD Potepuh.

⁶⁹ Margry, Peter Jan. (ed.). 2008. *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

⁷⁰ Coleman, Simon and John Eade. 2004. *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. London: Routledge.

⁷¹ Personal interview VU14

⁷² A common attitude, especially among the local population from Vukovar, is that of the betrayal of political elites from Zagreb, who let Vukovar fall into the hands of the JNA and paramilitary units from Serbia.

⁷³ The Croatian Army (Hrvatska vojska – HV) was officially established only on 3 November 1991, when the so-called Croatian National Guard (Zbor narodne garde – ZNG) was renamed. On the Croatian side fighting in Vukovar, there were the locally-based Territorial Defence units and

martyrdom. Similarly, Croatian *branitelji* who participated in the marathon, and who were very fond of recalling the Homeland War episodes and/or their own experience, opted out of the "heroic" language register and embraced the "victimhood/suffering" one. This, however, does not mean that the heroic identity element of the Homeland War was silenced or forgotten. Quite the contrary – it entered everyday life conversations and the cultural register of the community. For example, when one participant leaned his bicycle on another one, causing both bikes to hit the ground, someone from the group promptly exclaimed "Both of them! Both of them fell!" (*Obadva, obadva, oba su pala!*), referring to one of the most famous scenes from the war in Croatia, when in September 1991 two JNA planes were shot down near the town of Šibenik. Similarly, while visiting the Croatian Documentary Memorial Centre of the Homeland War the participants rushed to climb/touch/observe the exhibits of military buses/tanks/airplanes and were particularly interested in a sort of minefield 'garden' where various types of mines were exposed to the public.

The cyclists frequently mentioned their own suffering as a way of contributing to the memory of Vukovar: "I want to pay respect at least one day per year – I want to be victim myself and to achieve the finish line through suffering".⁷⁴ Some openly underlined their understanding of the marathon as a pilgrimage: "Vukovar is a sacred place – this cycling marathon is some kind of pilgrimage and effort so that we can give our personal contribution to the victim [of Vukovar]."⁷⁵

To some, the marathon represented a symbolic (re)appropriation of the territory that was once lost, and subsequently reintegrated into Croatia. In fact, it can be argued that the Day of Remembrance also represents a conditioned *ethnocracy* lasting for one day, as the Serbian minority not only does not participate, but withdraws from the public sphere on that day.⁷⁶ One can spot the 'Serbian' villages, i.e. places where the majority population is of Serbian ethnicity, not only because of the Orthodox religious objects or commercials for products of Serbian origin, but also because of the lack of candles lit on the street or exposed in the house windows. On one occasion, a dozen cyclists were chanting the Croatian national anthem, but otherwise did not have any particular reaction to the demographic structure of the places we visited. However, the attachment to territory should not "be understood as an issue of (ethno)nationality",⁷⁷ nor should it follow the sedentarist logic which presumes a naturalised link between people and place.⁷⁸

The attachment to the town was expressed in different ways - one participant from Dalmatia collected brochures from memorial exhibitions in Vukovar "because I have a central place in my cupboard [at home] reserved for

members of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, the ZNG and a small number of the newly-created Croatian defence force.

⁷⁴ Personal interview VU2

⁷⁵ Personal interview VU5

⁷⁶ Yiftachel, Oren. 1997. Nation-Building or Ethnic Fragmentation? Frontier Settlement and Collective Identities in Israel. *Space and Polity* 1(2), 149-69.

⁷⁷ Jansen, Stef. 2002. The Violence of Memories: Local Narratives of the Past after Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia. *Rethinking History* 6(1), 77-94.

⁷⁸ Jansen, Stef and Staffan Löfving. 2009. *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

memorabilia from Vukovar".⁷⁹ The feeling of belonging to a certain place is rather fluid and is further influenced by the later changes deriving from the war and trauma experience. Belonging implies collectiveness, it answers the question of 'who we are' and what defines 'us' and includes affective aspects in addition to cognitive ones.⁸⁰

My informants showed their dissatisfaction with the politicisation of memory and went as far as not wanting to attend the Memory Column *a priori*. However, the mainstream discourse of Vukovar being *the place* of suffering was never rejected, although it was not given the central place and priority. I argue that such acceptance stems from veterans' need to demonstrate that their own participation in the war was not in vain, i.e. that they need to have something to be proud of and to have contributed to a higher cause. Therefore the dignity of defenders has a meaning of emotional response,⁸¹ i.e. the feeling of "inherent value and worth" that people experience,⁸² but also as a relational concept putting forward the demand for social recognition. For at least one half of *branitelji* informants, riding a bicycle was a way for healing and therapy, mostly from PTSD, but so was the acceptance of the dominant narrative.

In a wider context of the Croatian war for independence, Vukovar was often evoked as the victim fallen for the better future of the whole of Croatia:

*"During the fall of Vukovar I fought in Slunj. I voluntarily joined the army after my father was killed. My region got away really well compared to Vukovar. Therefore, I go every year to pay tribute to the victims as they obtained everything we have now."*⁸³

Here, individual trauma and loss are judged as less important than that understood as collective. Moreover, the events in Vukovar were seen as detached from the rest of Croatia, as if they had happened somewhere else and to someone else. Consequently, the question of "competitive victimhood"⁸⁴ is tackled, i.e. under which circumstances a certain place is more 'sacred' than another and why suffering and victims belonging to different time periods and conditions are compared in the public sphere. For example, the difference between participants from Vukovar and other parts of Croatia was clearly articulated by some informants:

*"There are two columns – the first reserved for those that were in Vukovar and suffered. We cannot stand in that column, because we cannot conceive what they have been through. One day we are all going to die, and still that first column will remain."*⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Personal interview VU1

⁸⁰ Kovačević Bielički, Dragana. 2016. *Neither on the Earth, nor in the Skies. Negotiations of (non) Belonging among Former Yugoslav Refugees in Norway*. PhD dissertation.

⁸¹ Rios Oyola, Sandra Milena. 2019. Human Dignity, Memory and Reparations. Towards a new understanding of transitional justice. *Peace and Memory Working Paper 3*.

⁸² Hicks, Donna. 2011. *Dignity: The Essential Role It Plays in Resolving Conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁸³ Personal interview VU5

⁸⁴ Nielsen, Christian Axboe. 2018. *Collective and Competitive Victimhood as Identity in the Former Yugoslavia*, in *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling*, edited by Adler, Nanci. New Brunswick and Newark: Rutgers University Press

⁸⁵ Personal interview VU2

Finally, Vukovar's symbolic capital was used either to underline the purpose of the cycling marathon, or to warn and educate those prone to inadequate behaviour:

"Those who are not satisfied with the [organisational] details [of this trip] should recall that we are not going on an excursion, but to pay respect to all the victims in Vukovar. They can think of [this trip] as their own victim and be proud".⁸⁶

In addition, the transmission of memories and the legacy of the Vukovar battle, the siege, and the subsequent fall of the town are judged to be of particular importance for the generations born after the end of the war:

"Boards in the school hall [in Mitnica⁸⁷] are always decorated with students' artwork and essays that demonstrate the affection for the Homeland [sic!] and loved town of Vukovar. When we look at it, our hearts are filled [with joy], and our souls are calm, as we are certain that the future of Vukovar is in safe hands".⁸⁸

Standards of morality

The drive for visiting Vukovar was often connected to the words 'pride' and 'dignity', in semantically multi-layered contexts. The concept of dignity has a central role in the justification of human rights:⁸⁹ for example the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the inherent dignity of all individuals is the basis for "freedom, justice and peace in the world". The concept of dignity is usually used to address the restorative justice and is therefore mainly related to the victims of human rights violations. However, here it is detached from the individuals or vulnerable groups trying to overcome the endured atrocities; instead, it is associated with a material, physical place and/or abstract characterisation of the fought war.

Specifically, the notion of dignity in relation to Vukovar can be analysed on three levels. On the broader level of the official historical narrative and politics of memory, the "fundamental values and *dignity* of the Homeland War" are institutionalised in the 2000 Croatian Parliament's Declaration on the Homeland War (emphasis added)⁹⁰. Such values are considered to be "accepted by the entire Croatian nation and all citizens of Republic of Croatia", thus leaving no room for the contested narratives nevertheless present in the public space.⁹¹

Another dimension of dignity is its attribution to the town of Vukovar for its heroic resistance in the 1991-1995 war, and in particular during the siege of the town. Again, the symbolic categories of *hero* and *victim* are assigned to the town from outside, through official and public memory dynamics. In particular, the

⁸⁶ Personal interview VU11

⁸⁷ Neighborhood in Vukovar, the last one to fall in 1991.

⁸⁸ DBD Potepuh

⁸⁹ Rios Oyola, *Human Dignity*.

⁹⁰ Full text of the declaration: [Deklaracija o Domovinskom ratu](#). 2000. *Narodne Novine* 102, 17 October 2000 (accessed: 23 September 2021).

⁹¹ Banjeglav, Tamara. 2015. *Micro Legacy of the ICTY in Croatia. Case study of Vukovar*, in *Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Lessons from the Balkans*, edited by Fischer, Martina and Olivera Simić. London: Routledge, 81-101.

process of identification of an entire town is imposed from above, in a top-down initiative aiming to perpetuate the narrative of the past and freeze the process of the evolution of memory on all levels.

Conclusion

Taking the cycling marathon to the Vukovar commemoration as a case study, this article analysed the social production of memory in relation to the space and sense of belonging. While the collective memory of the participants were constructed around honouring human losses sustained during the 1991 to 1995 war in Croatia, a parallel process occurred on the national level: a process of generating "chosen trauma",⁹² i.e. trauma chosen to constitute a dominant narrative about the nation.⁹³ "Chosen trauma" does not focus on the inhabitants of Vukovar, but, through a politicised process of remembering, on the town itself.

A reaction to the dominant historical narrative imposed from above is a practice present in a myriad of cases, of which Vukovar represents no exception. Remembrance walks, like the March of the Living in Poland, Marcia della Pace in Italy, or the Ride to the Wall in the USA, just to name a few, all function on the basis of forging micro solidarities for a particular social or political cause. However, the main purpose of these journeys is not only the creation of a sense of community, but a wider visibility outside their own group dynamics. Creating and engaging in a dialogue with the official politics of memory and remembrance adds another dimension to the complex societal challenge of remembering a difficult past.

Funding Information: The writing of this article was made possible through funding from the PIASt and Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Action under the EURIAS Fellowship Programme, FP7 programme, grant agreement no 609400 and European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 795374.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank the participants of the Zagreb to Vukovar cycling marathon who provided not only valuable research material, but also taught me some important life lessons.

Bibliography

- Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka. 1995. Collective Memory and Cultural Identity. *New German Critique* 65, 125-33.
- Banjeglav, Tamara. 2015. *Micro Legacy of the ICTY in Croatia. Case study of Vukovar*, in *Transitional Justice and Reconciliation: Lessons from the Balkans*, edited by Fischer, Martina and Olivera Simić. London: Routledge.

⁹² Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

⁹³ Biruški, Dinka and Sandra Penić. 2014. *Traumatized Selves: Does War Trauma Facilitate In-Group Bonding and Out-Group Distancing?* in *War, Community, and Social Change: Collective Experiences in the Former Yugoslavia*, edited by Spini, Dario / Elchereth, Guy and Dinka Čorkalo Biruški. New York and Heidelberg: Springer, 137-153.

- Barth, Fredrik. 2000. *Boundaries and Connections*, in *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Identities*, edited by Cohen, Anthony. London: Routledge, 17-36.
- Biruški, Dinka and Sandra Penić. 2014. *Traumatized Selves: Does War Trauma Facilitate In-Group Bonding and Out-Group Distancing?* in *War, Community, and Social Change: Collective Experiences in the Former Yugoslavia*, edited by Spini, Dario / Elcheroth, Guy and Dinka Čorkalo Biruški. New York and Heidelberg: Springer, 137-53.
- Casey, Edward S. 1993. *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Coleman, Simon and John Eade. 2004. *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. London: Routledge.
- Collins, Randall. 2004. *Interaction Ritual Chains*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Deklaracija o Domovinskom ratu. 2000. *Narodne Novine* 102, 17 October 2000 (accessed: 23 September 2021).
- Dikić, Ivica. 1995. Živimo za povratak! *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 19 November 1995.
- Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske. 2016. Prosječne mjesečne isplaćene neto plaće zaposlenih za prosinac 2015 (accessed: 23 September 2021).
- Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.
- Eckel, Jan and Claudia Moisel. (eds.). 2008. *Universalisierung des Holocaust? Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik in internationaler Perspektive*. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Fortier, Anne-Marie. 2000. *Migrant Belongings: Memory, Space and Identity*. Oxford: Berg.
- Fox, Jon E. and Cynthia Miller-Idriss. 2008. Everyday Nationhood. *Ethnicities* 8(4), 536-63.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1992. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hicks, Donna. 2011. *Dignity: The Essential Role It Plays in Resolving Conflict*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Jansen, Stef and Staffan Löfving. 2009. *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Jansen, Stef. 2002. The Violence of Memories: Local Narratives of the Past after Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia. *Rethinking History* 6(1), 77-94.
- Jones, Paul, and Michał Krzyżanowski. 2011. *Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing 'Others'*, in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, edited by Delanty, Gerard, Wodak, Ruth and Paul Jones. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 38-53.
- Jović, Dejan. 2012. The War That Is Not Allowed to Be Forgotten: Nationalist Discourse on the 'Homeland War' (1991-1995) in Contemporary Croatia. *Südosteuropa Mitteilungen* 3, 52-69.
- Kostović, Ivica. 1996. Dan jecaja i plača, a ne pjesama i truba. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 November 1996.
- Kovačević Bielicki, Dragana. 2016. *Neither on the Earth, nor in the Skies. Negotiations of (non) Belonging among Former Yugoslav Refugees in Norway*. PhD dissertation

- Letter of the President to DBD Potepuh, 14/10/2014, classified under the number 053-02/15-0/478.
- Letter of the President to DBD Potepuh, 28/09/2017, classified under the number 053-02/17-03/551.
- Ljubojević, Ana. 2016. *Speak Up, Write Out: Language and Populism in Croatia*, in *Narratives of Identity in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, edited by Hancock, Landon E. Bradford: Emerald Group, 29-55.
- Malešević, Siniša. 2019. *Grounded Nationalisms: A Sociological Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Margry, Peter Jan. (ed.). 2008. *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- N.N. 1999. Godišnjica pada Vukovara - kad će zločinci pred sud? *Vjesnik*, 19 January 1999.
- N.N. 1998. Vukovar se diže iz pepela. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 19 November 1998.
- N.N. 1994 Nema Hrvatske bez Vukovara. *Vjesnik*, 19 November 1994.
- N.N. 1994. Vukovar se vraća kući. *Večernji list*, 19 November 1994.
- N.N. 1993. Grad junak. *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 18 November 1993.
- Nielsen, Christian Axboe. 2018. *Collective and Competitive Victimhood as Identity in the Former Yugoslavia*, in *Understanding the Age of Transitional Justice: Crimes, Courts, Commissions, and Chronicling*, edited by Adler, Nanci. New Brunswick and Newark: Rutgers University Press.
- Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire. *Representations* 26, 147-69.
- Olick, Jeffrey K. and Joyce Robbins. 1998. Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, 105-40.
- Povržanović Frykman, Maja. 2002. Violence and the Re-discovery of Place. *EthnologiaEuropaea* 32(2), 69-88.
- Probyn, Elspeth. 1996. *Outside Belongings*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Radonić, Ljiljana. 2017. Post-Communist Invocation of Europe: Memorial Museums' Narratives and the Europeanization of Memory. *National Identities* 19(2), 269-28.
- Rios Oyola, Sandra Milena. 2019. Human Dignity, Memory and Reparations. Towards a new understanding of transitional justice. *Peace and Memory Working Paper* 3.
- Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Sicakkan, Hakan. G. and Yngve Lithman. 2005. *Theorising Identity Politics, Belonging Modes and Citizenship*, in *Changing the Basis of Citizenship in the Modern State: Political Theory and the Politics of Diversity*, edited by Sicakkan, Hakan G. and Yngve Lithman. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 197-226.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *Liminality and Communitas*, in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, edited by Turner, Victor. Chicago: Aldine publishing.
- Volkan, Vamik. 1997. *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Welzer, Harald. (ed.). 2007. *Der Krieg der Erinnerung. Holocaust, Kollaboration und Widerstand im europäischen Gedächtnis*. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer.
- Yiftachel, Oren. 1997. Nation-Building or Ethnic Fragmentation? Frontier Settlement and Collective Identities in Israel. *Space and Polity* 1(2), 149-69.

- Zakon o blagdanima, spomendanima i neradnim danima u Republici Hrvatskoj.
2019. *Narodne novine* 110, 14 November 2019 (accessed: 20 March 2020).
- Zerubavel, Eviatar. 2003. *Calenders and History: A Comparative Study of the Social Organization of National Memory*, in *States of Memory. Continuities, Conflicts and Transformations in National Retrospection*, edited by Olick, Jeffrey K, Adams, Julia and George Steinmetz. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 315-37.