


# Balkan PERSPECTIVES

*A magazine on Dealing with the Past*



**Balkan100 –  
a regional approach to  
dealing with the past**



**The memory of the victims of  
war and tyranny — a general  
reflection in the German context**



**“Memory Lab”: Seeing  
the Western Balkans as  
an integral part of Europe**

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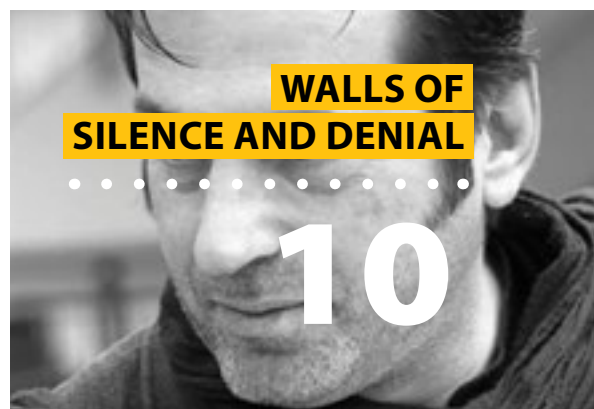
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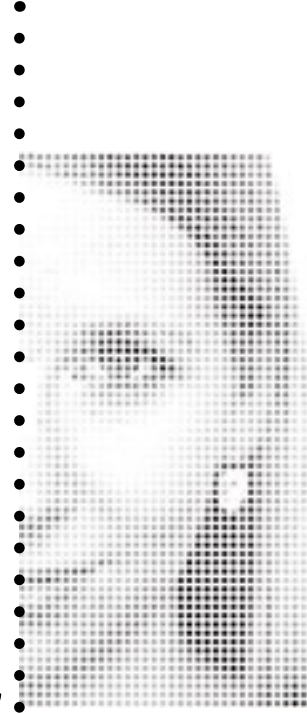
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# EDIT- ORIAL



• Pristina/Kosovo in  
• December of 2014

Dear readers,

**W**ars always represent an acute catastrophe for a society since they destroy the social order and confront the individual with violence and death. They also change the identity of all participants involved in the conflict. The post-war societies of the Western Balkans have established various narratives of the past that are mostly in conflict with one another and usually influenced by an ethnocentric point of view.

This new magazine, *Balkan.Perspectives*, is an answer to these conflicting historical narratives and aims to present alternative memory and alternative ways of dealing with the past in Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It offers a platform to regional and local actors that are committed to inclusive ways of confronting the past. “Dealing with the past” is not an artificial concept, it includes various actors such as artists, researchers, civil society activists, state representatives and many more. We want to offer our readers multiple perspectives and make the topic of “dealing with the past” more tangible to the societies in the Western Balkans. If you would like to receive the magazine on a regular basis, please subscribe to [balkan.perspectives@forumzfd.de](mailto:balkan.perspectives@forumzfd.de). The magazine will be published three times a year in four different languages (Macedonian, Albanian, BCS and English).

The first issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* explores the topic of different cultures of remembrance. As the “wall of memories” in our cover picture shows, the past is always composed of countless small, individual memories. In that sense, each war creates a plurality of wars since each individual absorbs a different experience. On a societal level, remembrance of the past should reflect these various memories and contribute to the creation of a historical narrative that is mutually respected.

Our authors tried to tackle the topic from different angles:

In our lead article, Dino Mustafić, a well-known theater and movie director from Bosnia and Herzegovina, asks why remembrance is crucial for today’s societies and how remembrance influences our common future. Dr. Thomas Lutz explores how the past can be remembered and presents an interesting overview of strategies for remembrance in post-war Germany. Nikola Radić, a Serbian artist, tells us why he chose to work on topics that are related to history and how he defines remembrance of the past for himself.

Other articles present initiatives from the region that are working on the topic of remembrance in different ways: through a photo project presenting family members of missing persons in Kosovo, through qualitative research in Macedonia and through projects that gather young people to reflect on cultures of remembrance in the Western Balkans.

We welcome and appreciate your opinions and feedback to our magazine. We hope you will take great pleasure in reading *Balkan.Perspectives* and that it inspires you whilst allowing you to reflect on your own personal culture of remembrance.

• Sincerely,  
• Maike Dafeld / Editor in chief

# THE FOG OF THE PAST IS NOT LIFTING FROM MACEDONIA

**13** years after the conflict in Macedonia, which has strained relations between the country's two largest ethnic groups, it appears that the state is not doing enough to reconcile the parties and to ensure a stable society. For state institutions and other key actors, dealing with the past is not a tool for building peace and harmony between citizens, while ethnic tensions, especially among younger generations, continues.

Croat Goran Bozinović, an expert in the field “Facing the Past”, says the process is at an early stage in Macedonia. “I look on ethnic diversity in Macedonia as a wealth and advantage. Inside inter-ethnic dialogues, there is a need to work on dealing with the past, but it is only one segment for me. We need to talk about topics that we do not talk about, to listen those who we do not agree with, so we can move forward. The goal is to not be congested and not to allow our children to carry our burdens,” said Bozinović.

According to Albert Hani from the NGO “forumZFD” Macedonia is lagging in these processes.

Macedonia as a state, conditionally speaking, is coming late with the treatment of this topic, but every beginning is a new opportunity, because many things associated with this topic have been put under the carpet. These issues should be addressed in the future, because they give us good opportunities, to not repeat the mistakes that happened in the past,” said Hani.

Rafiz Haliti, a former KLA soldier and current MP as well as vice-president of the Macedonian parliament, agrees that the country needs to make these efforts.

“I think it's never too late. The triggers that lead to conflicts should have been identified by now. If people do this sincerely, then it will be much easier to find common foundations to build the future from. This is in the interest of the whole nation and state,” considered Haliti, adding that the process should start from influential institutions, such as Macedonian academy of Arts and Sciences.

Former general of the Macedonian police Stojanco Angelov, who participated in the conflict on the opposite side, said that these processes depend in large part on the economic situation in the country.

“Surely, there are ways, but it will be difficult. No solution is possible if Macedonia is sinking into poverty. For a start, it is essential to improve the economic situation in the country and at the same time, to work on improving inter-ethnic relations, in a more organized, more intense and more comprehensive way,” he said.

Looking at the political circumstances in Macedonia, experts recommend that politicians, the media and other actors in the country, need a big boost to begin seriously dealing with dealing with the past.

By Mefail Ismaili and Maja Vaseva

## SERBIA

**Borko Kasanski, 42**

**My favorite memory is about one specific moment: the moment when I saw my current wife through the see-through screen of the proofreading section in “Večernje novosti” and when our eyes met. That memory is alive since that day in 1998. However, if we are going to focus on that first encounter, I remember every detail — enchantment, petrification and desire for us to be together. Later on we had many beautiful moments together (kids, jobs...), but the memory of that encounter of two soul mates definitely stays inside me as the undisputed favorite.**

**Marija Majstorović, 32**

**One certain thing in my life is that I will never forget the moment I became a mother, almost nine years ago. I gave birth to a very cute girl, who got a sister five years later and a brother a year on. The first look at the baby and recognition that everything is alright is something incomparable.**

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# What's your favourite memory?

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**Martin, 19**

I was at a concert and when the show began the introduction blew my mind — that's my favourite memory.

**Natasha, 47**

My favourite memory is when my child was born. He's 19 today and studying.

**Biljana, 33**

I love to remember the holiday I had with two friends in Ohrid. We stayed there for one week and laughed so much, it was great.

**Anastasia, 28**

My favourite memory is when I was in London for three months. My aunt and my cousin live there. I like the country a lot and it was great to see my family again.

## MACEDONIA

## KOSOVO

**Arber, 45**

My favourite memory is when my girl was born.

**Vjolla, 21**

I stayed in Albania during the war. When we came home, everything was ruined and our house was gone, but it was coming home and that's my favourite memory.

**Ron, 35**

My favourite memory is when the war was over. We understood that we're not going to die and that we're free to live.

**Mergim, 31**

I like to remember looking at the sky when I was four or five years old.

**Valdrin, 12**

I went with my family to the US. There are a lot of toys, I liked that — it's my favourite memory.

## BOSNIA AND

**Branka, 36**

"My strongest and the most beautiful memories dates from my early childhood. Sunday morning, the whole family together, peace and watching the Nedeljni zabavnik [Weekly Entertainer] show."

**Ado, 33**

"I remember how my parents used to protect me strongly and honestly during the war. My first associations with the war are not about death and hunger but about my parents' care. We always had some bread and during the whole of 1993 that's pretty much the only thing we had to eat. Yes, my parents protected my sister and me from the war as much as they were able to.

**Mirsada, 63**

"What do I remember? Well I mostly remember the life before the war, because that's when I felt I was alive. That period of life was the prettiest. Since the war started until today we have everything except life."

## HERCEGOVINA

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# REMEMBRANCE IS GUARANTOR OF F

BiH

Dino MUSTAFIĆ



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# S THE FREEDOM



Remembrance is an important part of us, part of our being. Our experiences in the Balkans are special, we have a need and obligation to convey our memories through the empathy for others because it opens the perspective of the future in which hatred and wars will not repeat themselves like a refrain throughout history. The selection of what we should and must remember, and the means by which we select it, is one of the essential questions of our society. Unfortunately, our memory is selective and filtrated through political and social perceptions within which historical events are observed without context and correlation with the time of their occurrence. We can often witness how the facts are being neglected and how the culture of oblivion and lies is being cherished. Art is important for keeping memories because it is a story about an individual, it is sensitive to manipulation and usurpation, it is about people still alive, while history is “glorious” and deals with the past. Artistic language creates space for the future, because it believes that the mind and imagination in communication with the audience can create parallel world of peace and freedom.

Because of that, the past often provides inspiration for artistic creations, because individual memory opens up the possibility of self review, contrary to historical memory that often uses interpretations to relativize facts, uses the victors’ point of view and falsifies the past. Brave, honest and critically engaged art is one of the ways to reassess the role and responsibility of individuals, collectivities and the state in violence and terror.

Valuable literary, filmic, theatrical, musical and painting works created in the past few years were creative remembrance, winning scope of freedom from a past seen as anxiety, evil and blood. Such works

touched history and remembrance in responsible and humane ways trough the prism of the micro-worlds of individuals and victims, jumped over all erected national barriers and walls of hatred, awakened compassion and made us reassess our conscience and remorse.

Art is also a fight against the apathy that comes from the evil that humiliates the victims and deepens the gap between ethnic communities. Remembering an event, makes it alive again. Remembering a character connects it to the event. We cannot forget what happened but we have to forgive. For that to happen, every word has to be written down, every tear has to be weighted and every sacrifice has to be measured. The only way to do so is to cherish a culture of sympathy and empathy so that future generations never repeat the cruelties to those of different ethnicity or religious affiliation.

If we remain indifferent towards the lessons of our past, we will become indifferent towards inseparable hopes for the future. That’s how we come to the essence: “if we forget, we shall be forgotten”. That’s why remembrance is the guarantor of freedom. Artists feel the world through the beat of their heart and see life as a principle of the highest value, that’s why there is a solid bond between artists and remembrance because without responsible and conscious dealing with the past, future is not possible.

*Dino Mustafić is well known theater and movie director from Bosnia and Herzegovina. He graduated from Academy of Performing Arts in Sarajevo. He is the head of the oldest theatre festival in the region, International Theatre Festival MESS. He re-established the festival with his associates after the siege of Sarajevo. Cultural heritage of recent wars in BiH is present in his creative work.*



# “A CHERISHED HEREDITARY DISEASE OF MELANCHOLY AND PRIDE”

“Fever / numismatic value”, 2013, Combined media,  
Artwork: Nikola Radić Lucati, Research: Dr Milovan  
Pisari. Shown at “Vot Ken You Mach” exhibition at  
KhD - Kunsthaus Dresden



*Nikola Radić Lucati grew up in Belgrade in a very artistic family. “In nearly every hand in my family there was a pen, a brush or a camera. I basically grew up drawing and taking pictures,” he explains. Studying arts in Belgrade and Jerusalem, he realized that misused collective memory had been used to divide and radicalise the citizens of 1980s and 1990s Yugoslavia. “This form of manipulation uses culture as a medium and can be successfully fought in that field,” he believes. In the following interview he talks about culture of remembrance, dealing with the past in Serbia and the role of art.*

## **Nikola, culture of remembrance is an often used term. What does it mean for you?**

For me, culture of remembrance has only a passing relation to culture. It is a dynamically changing environment of economic and political projections. The cultural packaging is a convenient pacifier, limiting the consequences of constant rebranding of political and economic products into culture.

The problem arises when fragile historical narratives are subjected to such abrasive treatment. What we are talking about is, after all, the loss of real history to a mechanism of continuous re-editing and censorship. One of the methods to counter this is to go back to the original, unedited document, testimony, artefact, and include them in the re-examination of the present condition of the narrative.

## **You live and work in Belgrade. What does culture of remembrance mean in Serbia?**

In Serbia, the culture of remembrance has traditionally been a cherished hereditary disease of melancholy and pride, nourished by the continuous

hardship and all-too-real victimhood of Serbian people and its minorities. The collective memory, which for centuries knew how to glorify heroes and preserve the faith, had been mutated into a set of cohesive narratives and then, the official history, for frequent re-use by the nationalist ideologues since the 1930s.

Today, the “culture of remembrance”, or rather, “remembering to forget”, sadly stands for forced, revisionist violation of history, through the continuous attempts to arrive at a single, affirmative, national narrative. The quest for the Holy Grail of uncontested hegemony of national mythology over history, is currently being converted into more modest, attainable goals – political advantage, economic benefit, avoidance of restitution, etc...

## **You’re an artist dealing with the past. Why does art have to deal with culture of remembrance?**

As the recent wave of censorship and firings in the media and institutions of culture shows, the state cannot be left alone in the same room as its history and culture without adult supervision of some sort. The nationalist Serbian

expansionist project has re-aligned along the “if not bigger, then purer” principle. Neo-Nazi parties are on the rise, and most attacks are based on class differentiation, alongside the racist incitement. Minorities are no longer 40% of the population, and the media are turning into tabloids, panicky defence of economic Darwinism with re-heated, and yet, non-sovereign nationalism. Unless cultural space is contested by factual history, no new generation can take up the lead toward a new, assertive and ethical approach to the role art and remembrance play as a pluralist platform for a democratic society.

## **Let’s come to your personal work. How do you deal with culture of remembrance?**

In my work, I am applying documentary and empirical research on subjects that are part of the recurring processes. I tend to return frequently to the sites, re-read and re-interrogate the seemingly “fixed” narratives for often-overlooked patterns. It tends to get personal, and I allow myself to be immersed in the subject, possibly over-identifying with it. In an effort to avoid the dangers of over-



editing and simplification, I am offering large parts of the findings unaltered, as found in an archive, or documented on-site.

Historical, collective and personal memory are not interchangeable, and by making their distinct voices heard, I am trying to show the underlying processes of constant adaptation of the language of memory in minority victims' communities, as they carry on surviving by internalizing the projections of the dominant majority.

**You've been working on culture of remembrance for quite a while now. Could you realize a change, about culture of remembrance itself, about how society, politics and art deal with it?**

"Dealing with it" is a good description – the "it" is being "dealt with" on the

middle-management level of fixing immediate PR problems. As "it" is being seen as a commercial opportunity as well, the "it" has become a growing, dynamically developing, semi-privatized part of local nationalist PR, culture and economy. Such an ecosystem is incapable of delivering results relevant to ethical education based on the experience of the Holocaust and the genocides, and is liable to lead to new conflicts. Still, the public is reacting to that ethical deficiency. Even though the post-90s generations of Serbian society have been raised on selective interpretations of history, the attendance numbers at talks and exhibitions are growing, the audiences seem willing to be engaged and eager to express their feelings and show support. The ethical and emotional gap between the approach of the state and the response of the people has rarely been wider, and the gradual build-up of

alternative, civilian, historical education could lead to a common narrative ground to grow a new, non-exclusivist culture of remembrance.

**What idea of society do you have in mind dealing with the past in an artistic way? What is your utopia?**

One of the small things being eroded by the pressure of depoliticising culture is the utopia of freedom and equality, through creating the "cultured" memory of them as a better past. Just like the past, utopias are dangerous. But unlike the past, they are always worth fighting for.

<http://www.nikolaradiclucati.com/>



The record - "...the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about."(Genesis 23:16).  
Shown at the "Missing Places" at KC Grad, 9-15th 8. 2012. Curated by Dejan Atanacković

# WALLS OF SILENCE AND DENIAL



XHABIR DERALLA

Remembering the past – Building the Future is a project that tried to tackle several sensitive topics within the area of dealing with the past in the Republic of Macedonia. The project comes in difficult times for a country facing serious deterioration in meeting basic human rights standards, democracy and rule of law. A country with a long-standing dispute over its name with neighbouring Greece and struggling to build its own national identity now has a ruling coalition of the nationalist parties of the Macedonian majority and large Albanian minority in the country.

The government itself is torn from within. The ethnic Macedonian part of the government attempts to impose the ethnic identity of the majority of ethnic Macedonians, mainly Orthodox Christians, as a national identity, disregarding the numerous ethnic and national minorities, predominantly of Islamic faith. Building a multi-ethnic and multicultural state and identity is yet another precondition to the country's Euro-Atlantic integration processes, a premise that is demanded by progressive parts of society and by minorities.

Balkan societies, in general, suffer from centuries-long differences and clashes over identity and overlapping histories. In this context, Macedonia is probably in the most delicate position, having its territory, name, identity, language and history disputed at various levels and by various neighbouring nations. Also, within the society, there is an enduring debate over essential issues within these topics.

In such circumstances, Civil and *forumZFD* have conducted a multifaceted pilot research in three ethnically mixed municipalities in the country, including a project component at a national level, using a combination of action research and reflecting on peace practices methodologies. It included historical events and processes since the Ilinden Uprising for liberation from Ottoman rule in 1903 to the present day.

Researchers from Civil tried to find out what are the forms and contents of local cultures of remembrance, as well as the perception of relevant representatives of ethnic communities, stakeholders and actors on what are the functions of local cultures of remembrance. The researchers also tried to find out what is the perception of the numerous participants in the research on the future-oriented/alternative local cultures of remembrance. Unfortunately, very little, if any, light could be seen at the end of the tunnel, yet.

Impregnated with party politics, lasting prejudices and stereotypes, unresolved issues in the past, nationalism and distrust, the local communities included in the research do not seem to be able to even come close to an agreement on any of the historical events and processes. The war in 2001, in which the two largest ethnic communities clashed, is still alive in the memory of the people, and is perceived in entirely opposite ways.

Even those few historical events that could serve as connectors between the different ethnic communities — such as the Ilinden Uprising which had a strong social component back then, and was inviting all communities, including local Turks, or the Second World War — do not succeed to bring the ethnic communities closer in the context of dealing with the past and remembrance at a local level.

Another interesting, if not intriguing observation is that no participant in the research has mentioned the Holocaust and the deportation of Jews from Macedonia during WWII. That is one more aspect that needs to be researched in our future work, illustrating one more of the many voids in remembrance that remain surrounded by walls of silence and denial.

# THE MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF WAR AND TYRANNY : A GENERAL REFLECTION IN THE GERMAN CONTEXT

Over the last decades, it has become a common practice after the end of wars, dictatorships and crimes against humanity to ask for a confrontation of past crimes.

The fundamental question arises as to whether after the end of war and violent crimes such intense confrontation with past losses of human lives is useful.

In human history it was customary to draw a line under the past and to bring the persons mainly responsible to justice while granting a general amnesty. On this basis, a fresh start both in inter-state relations and within a society was accomplished. However, this way of dealing with conflict implied amnesia. The victims were forgotten; they received neither financial compensation nor other types of social assistance while those who took part in military conflicts or public crimes could continue to live a good life.

The way to deal with the history of crimes changed in the last third of the twentieth century, however. Of crucial importance were the crimes committed by Germans during the Nazi era, which, by their unique dimension, resulted, after a period of "amnesia", in the call for an adequate culture of remembrance beyond all political instrumentalisation.

After its unconditional surrender, Germany was forced by the Allies to break with Nazi ideology and to pay indemnities — partly individually to victims but mostly as war reparations to states. Nonetheless, a common policy of repressing the past dominated in both the German states. Victim groups continued to face social exclusion and discrimination. Neither the members of the majority society had to address their involvement in crimes committed, nor were the direct perpetrators prosecuted at a larger scale.

It was not until the 1970s that the gradual process of dealing with the past began. Marginalized groups were officially recognized, they received financial compensation and state funding with regard to their social and cultural

interests. The history of Nazi persecution served them to create its own form of remembrance linked to a process of group identification.

As important a societal achievement as this was, the question of accountability for these crimes which arose some years later marked a not-to-be-underestimated form of societal self-reflection and self-assurance. It is very difficult for a society to endure the question of involvement in crimes of its members.

The following can be generally stated from looking at how Germany dealt with crimes committed during the Nazi past:

- An honest way of dealing with state crimes can contribute to ensuring that the persecuted, the survivors and their relatives receive compensation. In addition to financial support, societal recognition can be an important contribution to help them to start over. In international relations, too, the recognition of foreign victims marks a first, important step for a policy of understanding and mutual recognition.

- The question of the perpetrators in public institutions as much as the participation of individuals, can contribute to ensuring succeeding generations cast a critical eye on state actions and break down existing discrimination at many levels — towards the victims of the past as well as in the present. Especially if perpetrators have to fear being held accountable sooner or later, this represents an important form of prevention.

- Only if the past is dealt with honestly and comprehensively is it possible to prevent its recurrence and to establish appropriate structures in state processes, societal acceptance and last but not least encounters of former opponents, in order to avoid similar military conflicts or public crimes.

- If the past, also the unpleasant part for one's own side, is repressed, there is a constant danger for it to dramatically resurface and for the conflicts to continue.



# BALKAN100

## A REGIONAL APPROACH TO DEALING WITH THE PAST

**F**rom July 31<sup>st</sup> to August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, in Struga, Macedonia, forumZFD launched Balkan 100. The project aims to start the process of dealing with parallel and often conflicting pasts in the Balkans by raising awareness of the various aspects of collective identities of communities in Balkans. Young people of different interests and affiliations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia participated in this project. The whole project will last for three years and will provide many social and educational activities.

During the first workshop in Macedonia participants had the chance to raise questions about collective and individual pasts, to try to critically evaluate their own standpoints about those questions, and to exchange and compare their narratives. Moreover, the workshop provided an opportunity for anthropological research in the village of Radovište, where the participants had chance to examine perspective and the process of creation of the collective memory of the villagers about the great atrocity that took place in there village late in World War Two.

Despite the fact that the admission process is over, local communities and other actors within the project will include new participants occasionally. Dealing with the past in Balkans is not supposed to be and will not be a privilege of the narrow group participating in Balkan 100, it will be available to all those who are willing to question their standpoints and check if there is anything that could be learned from “the others”.

*This article was first published on the archaeological web portal [arheon.org](http://arheon.org)*

By Marko Barišić



**T**he past shapes the present through its presence in the public space and in the official cultures of remembrance including commemorations, museum initiatives, textbooks, legislation, commissions and political discourse. The countries in the post-Yugoslav space may share the same past, but the dominant historical discourses about “the short twentieth century” differ in each country. This especially became obvious after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the creation of nation states, which, going through transition, have sought to separate from the Yugoslav master narratives and create their own national histories and cultures of remembrance, with an emphasis on different historical events and their aspects. The wars following the dissolution of Yugoslavia further added to these processes. The contested narratives in the region include different notions of glorious past, collective suffering and victimization and often denial of nations’ own crimes from the past. That is why the Balkan 100 project with its regional orientation is necessary. By bringing together not only young scholars from different disciplines but also people from other fields, it is an important part of a much needed process of dealing with the past and analysing and questioning the dominant historical narratives in the region.

This project is closely related to my doctoral research, which focuses on the changes in the culture of remembrance of the Second World War in Serbia, which is one of the reasons I am participating. Another important facet of the project for me is its wider focus, encompassing not only one historical event and the chance to engage not only with collective but also individual memories in the Balkans. That, together with networking, informal interactions and discussions with the other participants about different aspects of these topics during workshops, makes this project a great opportunity to learn and exchange knowledge.

By Jelena Dureinović  
*PhD candidate, International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture, Gießen*

**S**ince the 90s, national programs of history, media and popular culture in Balkans were focused mostly on creating new collective identities adjusted to the new political circumstances of the time. For many young people here, it is hard to leave this discourse since it seems natural and normal, even though it is not. Balkan 100 is an important project through which at least some of the youngsters will be taught to apply post-modern scientific approaches to identities and local histories in order to bring more understanding and peace for their both national and personal wellbeing. Furthermore, I hope the experience of the participants will be shared among their local communities and that change in perception of history as well as life in general will be reached.

By Marko Barišić

**O**ne of my great personal and professional interests is the wellbeing of the people in post-conflict areas and especially in the Western Balkans. This project is giving me the opportunity to meet, discuss and most importantly cooperate with people from different countries in the region. I believe that dealing with the past is a task of every new generation around the globe and for us in the region sometimes dealing with the past can be crucial for creating a better future. Balkan 100 provides me with a space in which I can ask questions and get answers, open topics and develop projects that I am passionate about. Furthermore, I am looking forward to developing close relationships with participants from the region and together with them working on these issues.

By Rodoljub Jovanović

**F**orgiveness does not erase a bitter past. A cured memory is not a memory that can be erased. In contrast, forgiving something you cannot forget creates a new form of memory. “We change our memory about the past with high hopes for the future,” Lewis Smedes said. Dealing with the past, during which human rights were seriously violated, is one of the biggest challenges our society is facing. This project is very important because it aims to encourage societies to take over the responsibility of promoting peace. This process is also very hard and painful, especially for the victims who survived the war, but I am quite convinced that it — peace — is nothing that cannot be achieved. I believe that similar initiatives have to be taken also by state institutions and other important actors.

The use of nationalism and religion as tools to incite hatred and violence is not at all human. New generations need to be taught about the need to work together for a common good goal without falling into the trap of evil. Inter-regional projects like this, especially the ones that target the youth, will help in restoring social relations based on mutual trust, empathy, tolerance and peace.

Thus, the history of the Balkans needs to be reviewed, especially the one written in the schoolbooks used by new generations. I believe that the most important thing in this process is the aspiration and insistence to remain loyal to the goal until the end no matter what challenges might occur in the future.

The interest to participate in this training derives from my desire to extend and deepen my knowledge in this field. After I graduate in psychology, I think that this will help me understand the impact of many factors on the so called collective consciousness. I also believe that I need to learn more about the strategies which people can use in order to deal effectively with the past.

By Shejlla Avdiq



# “MEMORY LAB”: SEEING THE WESTERN BALKANS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF EUROPE



**T**he starting point of the trans-European platform “Memory Lab” was simple: Many people who are dealing with the past in Western/Central Europe don’t know much about what is going on in this field in the Western Balkans, and vice-versa. This reflects the general gap which continues to exist between South

Eastern Europe and the rest of Europe. Memory Lab wants to be an opportunity to bring together initiatives from both parts of Europe which are dealing with the history of wars and mass violence in the 20th century, so that they can exchange experiences, knowledge and know-how, and develop common activities. More generally,







the platform aims to contribute to the strengthening of constructive approaches of dealing with difficult pasts and to the development of a shared memory space in Europe where experiences and practices from the Western Balkans are seen as important and valuable as experiences and practices from other European countries. Since 2010, Memory Lab (named “Dealing with difficult pasts in Western Europe and the Western Balkans” until 2013) has organized annual workshops and study trips in different parts of Europe: Starting with Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010, then Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in 2011, France in 2012, Germany in 2013, and most recently in 2014 Kosovo and Macedonia. 40 persons working in memorials, museums and NGOs from Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Kosovo, Macedonia, the Netherlands and Serbia participated in this program, which was organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH, *forumZFD* Kosovo, the French-German Youth Office (FGYO), Alter Habitus and LOJA – Center for Balkan Cooperation. The group visited different memory sites in Kosovo and Macedonia, exchanged views with persons working on memorialization in both countries, such as Nita Luci, Saranda Bogujevci and Goran Janey, and explored the treated topics in greater depth through working sessions. As in previous years, the program also provided the opportunity to develop cooperation projects

between the participating organizations: one direct result of the 2014 Memory Lab–trip is, for example, that the HLC Kosovo, the YIHR Serbia, the Max-Mannheimer-Studienzentrum Dachau, the Youth Department of Limoges and the FGYO plan to organize in 2015/6 a seminar cycle for students from Kosovo, Serbia, France and Germany about “War crimes and trials in Europe”. After Macedonia and Kosovo in 2014, the next annual Memory Lab study trip and workshop is planned to take place in October 2015 in Belgium, in order to learn about and exchange approaches for dealing with the legacies of the First and the Second World Wars, but also with colonial history, and also about the Museum of European History which is scheduled to open in Brussels in 2015.

*For more information: [www.memorylab-europe.eu](http://www.memorylab-europe.eu)*



Nicolas Moll  
*General coordinator “Memory Lab”*



# FOR THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER AMONG US

**W**ars and state repression have created shattered societies and left many people traumatized, displaced and disappeared. Kosovo is one of those societies and is deeply affected by serious human rights violations. The issues Kosovo's people and its institutions have to deal with vary, starting with the lack of trust among ethnic groups, the denial of the evil of the past and the lack of institutional capacities to accommodate big social changes. The transition from armed conflict and repression to peace and a functional democracy requires society to take a stand on the massive human rights violations, which occurred in the recent past. Kosovo started to establish the foundations for a new beginning when it declared independence on February 17th, 2008. In this context, it is essential to focus on healing the wounds caused by the traumatic past and to resolve the existing complaints of the people. More than 1,500 people remain missing in Kosovo. Since they were established, Kosovo institutions have been continuously criticized for disengagement in shedding light on the fate of people who went missing during the Kosovo conflict. The strongest criticism was put on these institutions last year, when Kosovo and Serbia started a dialogue to normalize relations between each other.

Despite the fact that the state is obliged to deal with the missing persons issue, there are several other groups, which were trying to advocate and find answers about the fate of more than 1,500 missing persons. In general, there is a lack of social awareness about the need for dealing with the past and its forms. Hence, there is a need to make society aware of the importance of dealing with the past as a process of rehabilitation, normalization and as a process which is vital for the families of the victims who seek the truth and others affected by the war.

Dardan Hoti, journalist, and Fitim Selimi, photo-reporter, are among those who want to assist in this process through their reports and photos.

Their planned project aims to document all human rights violations, while it also attempts to establish the ground for an adequate form of remembrance and respect for the missing persons in Kosovo. Through this project, Dardan and Fitim also seek to contribute to a wider discussion about the transition of justice in dealing with the past. They strive to offer the public untold stories from the relatives of the missing persons from three affected communities: the Roma, the Serbs and the Albanians.





## The documentary

**H**oti and Selimi will make a documentary about the missing persons in Kosovo. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted with relatives of the missing from all ethnic communities in order to give an opportunity for the public to hear so far untold stories. For the first time, a documentary including the relatives of the missing persons from all communities will be prepared. This documentary is special because it will focus on three time periods:

- The past of the interviewee/relative/ friend/ as seen through a special item (ed. clothes, photo, etc.) that belonged to the missing person and helps with remembering him/her
- The present of the interviewee/relative/friend of a missing person — the challenges and struggles he/she deals with
- The future of the interviewee/relative/friend of a missing person. Hoti and Selimi will prepare a screenplay, which will be recorded for the documentary.

## How are they going to do it?

Dardan and Fitim already have an idea on how to contribute to this issue. They plan to publish a newspaper supplement, film a documentary and organize an exhibition.

## The newspaper supplement

The newspaper supplement will consist of twelve pages, each of which will be a triptych focused on a survivor whose story portrays a missing person. The photography will be divided into three parts followed by three narrations about the memories, the absence and the life after the disappearance of each individual.

## The exhibition

**T**he exhibition, which is part of this project, is going to be called: “Three dimensions”. Three dimensions will show a personage from head to feet. The head of the personage will offer an expression; the hands at the waistline will hold an item or anything that has remained from the disappeared person. The feet, in the meantime, will show the walk a relative of a missing person makes towards resolving the fate of the missing persons. Through these three activities, Hoti and Selimi will try to raise the awareness for the missing

persons in society and to increase the amount of information about this issue — mainly for people who were not affected by the war or who are not missing any of their family members. They also aim to increase capacities for dealing with this issue and discussions among youngsters so they can form an opinion about the past and the war. Consequently, the people of Kosovo will learn about “the other side of the story” through stories told by the relatives of the missing persons.



# KOSOVO AND MACEDONIA: IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY

The study trip to Kosovo and Macedonia reaffirmed and improved my understanding of memorialization of the past events. We have visited countries that were the last to experience armed conflicts on the soil of the former Yugoslavia.

Conflict in Kosovo has left deep divisions among two communities which now co-exist in separate worlds and only occasionally intertwine. The impression is that the memorization is following that pattern, therefore monuments are exclusively mono-ethnic. The state of Kosovo has founded few state memorials and is more focused of creation of identities based on other features, mainly based on independence from Serbia. Kosovo and its citizens are seeking to establish an identity which is completely unrelated to the former Yugoslavia, the Balkans and especially Serbia. From my point of view, there is a certain identity crisis. Flags of the USA and the EU can be seen waving over the state institutions as an homage to the champions and friends of Kosovo.

Memorial sites at Gazimestan and the monument of "Brotherhood and Unity" [Bratstvo i jedinstvo] are under the state's memorialization projects and therefore are a bit forgotten or even altered to reflect current needs of the young state of Kosovo. For example, human figures, parts of the monument "Brotherhood and Unity" are painted like flags of major powers that supported creation of the young

state of Kosovo. That is the conversion of one state program of memory into another. Political elites have decided to remember only one part of the past, the one they believe it "valuable" to remember. By doing so, they have pushed the socialist era with all its adversities into oblivion contrary to the 1990s, because that bloody decade resulted in the independence of Kosovo. "Adem Jashari" memorial represents Kosovo's state project of memorialization of the 1998-99 war. It was built and is maintained by the state, but it was also supplemented by living members of Jashari family that still live there. That gives the memorial a new meaning – defiance of death, immortality. In this sense the policies of memorialization in Kosovo really differ from those in Croatia. In Croatia the state has built many monuments in memorial of the Homeland War [Domovinski rat] (the name used for 1990s war, which is symbolically powerful per se).

In my opinion, monuments erected as a result of private initiatives prevail in Kosovo. Citizens had the need to remember and mark their memories beyond the reach of the state. As a result there is an extremely chaotic and uneven approach to memorialization. On the other hand, that approach cre-

ates the impression of authenticity and privacy during visits to the memorials. There are such monuments in Croatia as well but they usually come from local communities and victims' organizations guided by politicians.

Similarly, memorialization in Macedonia works in a dichotomy of public and private —local commemoration of events from the past. Project Skopje 2014 represents a decidedly state project on a meta-ideological level which "forcefully" tries to build an identity based on constructed and manipulated past. The monuments send a clear message about its mono-ethnicity and exclusiveness toward citizens of Albanian ethnicity. That can be seen by the very location of the monuments. There is a resemblance to state projects in Croatia, the only difference is that Macedonian project is overemphasized and reaches deeper into the past.

On the other hand, monuments on local and private level are different. A memorial dedicated to citizens killed in the village of Neprošteno represents one micro-local, private form of commemoration. It doesn't send a hateful message nor does it speak about the perpetrators. That's very different from memorials in

Croatia, which emphasize the perpetrators. Even the creators and sponsors of the monuments say that this monument is open for everyone and that interethnic relations are good. Afterwards we found out that a few Albanians were killed in that village as well and that their names were not marked on the monument. So, the impression is again that the monument is mono-ethnic and that it tells just half of the story.

The second memorial, created after private, local initiative, was "Albanian mother". The memorial has been reserved only for Albanians in its name. Originally it was meant to serve as a memorial for Albanian victims of the Balkan Wars 1912-13, but it became a monument to all Albanians in the region who were killed or suffered in multiple wars. The memorial is pretty much chaotic with an unclear original idea. Even more confusing is the comment of our guide, who said that despite the name, Albanian flag and other symbols, this monument will be dedicated to all the citizens of the region, including Macedonians. The level to which the national character of the memorial is concealed and interethnic disputes and conflicts are negated is completely different to Croatia. In Croatia, monuments are almost exclusively mono-ethnic and no one even tries to hide it, because identity "against" or "opposed" to the other is the foundation of Croatian identity.

# THE COMMON VOICES

In the next few months we came up with a truly colorful assembly of musicians, journalists, researchers, entrepreneurs, men of religion and civic society: ordinary men and women of Kosovo from as diverse walks of life, amused in the process of realizing each other's similarities, entertained by their differences.

**D**ukagjin Gorani, chairperson of the Common Voice Forum, looks back on the process of forming a new platform for conflict prevention and community advocacy in Kosovo

It was a sunny morning in early September 2013 at Belgrade's Hyatt Hotel reception when Mr Paul Partner, a Peace and Development Advisor with the UN Department of Political Affairs and the UNDP Kosovo, approached me with a proposal. He had been closely following a panel at Belgrade's renowned Security Forum where I, together with colleagues from Kosovo's civic society, had the chance to speak. Paul wondered about the possibility of reproducing the reasonable discourse of that panel as something larger and much bolder. He wondered whether that could become a common part of Kosovo's public language about inter-ethnic understanding. He imagined a larger group of similar people, common and ordinary, forming a habitual forum which would come alive solely because of their personal commitment to coexist peacefully and cooperate truly.

In early April 2014 we set out for our first meeting. Montenegro's Budva in spring can become yours, and only yours truly. Over two days the modest group is steadily enchanted with each other. Endless discussions, ideas, wishes, ways of talking, thinking and acting. Paul Mecklenburg, special counselor to UNMIK's SRSG, Farid Zarif, notices an important fact in his witty, American way: "You got such an amazing thing going on here, man. Cherish it, don't lose it." So true.

After Budva came Gracanica, Ohrid, Kopaonik, Tirana, with meetings in Prizren, Prishtina and Mitrovica inbetween. In time, this extraordinary forum of ordinary people acquired a new name: Common Voice: a platform for conflict prevention and community advocacy. Just recently it has been housed within the offices of the Liberal Democrat Centre, a local think-tank in Prishtina's Aktash neighborhood. This is where its secretariat, headed by Bekim Beka and Zarko Krtinic prepares meetings and sessions of the forum's members. It is where people like Besa Luzha, Petar Miletic, Shkumbin Brestovci, Veljko Samardzic, Lejla Haxhiu-Pula, Kujtim Paçaku, Dardan Velija, Birol Urcan, Blerita Avdili, Ljubisa Bascarevic and many others drop by. They are engaged in preparing and implementing a most diverse range of projects: from policy recommendations to documentary films; from public statements to cultural events.

Make sure you drop by, too.

KOS



# THE FINGER

*“The Finger” is a forefinger, that doesn't know where to point to, and that's not capable of finding the perpetrator. This piece represents the shadow of a giant finger pointing at you, making you feel guilty. That's the finger that offers both reconciliation and separation. That's the excuse for you to cry over trivial pain caused by trivial housework, like a mask for the bigger, more important pain inside you. That is a permanent reminder of the fact that something bad has been done and that everything can fall apart. That's a threat. That's something you scratch yourself with. That's something you touch with. – Doruntina Basha*

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Around 30,000 persons went missing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from which 9,000 are still to be found. The drama of the war, which ended before the end of the last century, continues for their families. Hope dies with the death of the seeker. Seeking itself is what is common between artists and our fellow citizens. Theater is a place of search, of hope, of craving for truth and a place where one can meet the truth. One could say that fact is a more than sufficient reason for Sarajevo War Theatre (SARTR) to decide to play drama *The Finger* by Doruntina Basha.

The *Finger* is the story of a mother and wife's ten-year sorrow and hope that their husband and son will miraculously come back. These two women feel immense pain for the person they have lost and they try to face the truth. They do that by hurting each other, accusing each other, struggling for power over each other, not standing each other, not being able to live with each other, but they also cannot go on without each other. They feel alive only during that struggle and mutual hurting. That's the world of the families and relatives of those 9,000 still missing. A world that no one knows but them. Although drama, *The Finger* is placed in the context

of the missing persons issue, it is fully told from the perspective of the women that were left behind, alone and trapped within themselves.

The task of performing this drama is entrusted not only to the artists and actors but to women, mothers, sisters, daughters, wives... They are searching for the truth, justice, love, beauty, peace; they are searching for all of us – THE MISSING PEOPLE!

The *Finger* premiered on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at SARTR. The play was produced by Sarajevo War Theatre with support of the US Embassy in Sarajevo, the Department for Public Relations in cooperation with *forumZFD* in BiH (Civil peace service) and Foundation Publika. The main sponsor of the SARTR is BH Telekom.

A roundtable titled “Between Hope and History” took place on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in SARTR after the show. The panelists were Viktorija Ružičić-Tokić (ICMP), Sabrina Begović (director), Selma Alispahić (actor) and Selma Korjenić (TRIAL). Play *The Finger* will be part of the repertoire of SARTR for the 2015.



# MACEDONIAN JOURNALISTS: DEALING WITH THE PAST IS NECESSARY FOR THE MEDIA

Journalists of different media believe dealing with the past is a real challenge for journalists and the media in Macedonia. They say that journalists are familiar with this concept, but they admit that there is a lack of initiative among them to deal with it.

Anita Dimitrijevska, journalist at the Macedonian state television, said journalists in Macedonia report about this topic only if something related to it happens. “Only a few journalists take the initiative to focus their reporting on this issue to which little attention is paid. Media, especially written media, have more opportunities to investigate issues linked to this topic because of the space they have,” Dimitrijevska said.

Meanwhile, Adrian Kerimi, ALSAT-M reporter, said, “Journalists and the media in Macedonia should learn from the experience of media in other countries, especially those in Africa, in order to understand how to deal with the past and how to contribute to its coverage in other media and in public”.

Salie Sadiku, journalist at TV Gurra in Kercove, believes that dealing with the past is a good option to be taken also by local media as most of the municipalities in Macedonia are multi-ethnic.

“In this regard, I would mention Kercova, a small town populated by the two biggest ethnicities: Macedonians and Albanians. But, during the last local elections there were some tensions and hatred speech was used. [This happened] due to existing prejudices against each other and as a result of an ethnic battle rather than a willingness to elect the best candidate for mayor,” she said after a training organized by *forumZFD*.

# GAVRILO PRINCIP - NATIONAL HERO OR TERRORIST?



## SERBIA

“One person’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter“. A hundred years after the Sarajevo assassination the question arises again, which designation to choose for Gavrilo Princip? In June 1914, Princip shot the Austrian heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand and thus triggered a cascade of events which led to the outbreak of World War One. Driven by his wish for the liberation of Bosnia, he committed a political murder whose consequences were impossible to predict, neither for him nor for politicians in Serbia and Europe. The ambivalent assessment of his action is still reflected in Serbs’ relationship to their recent history. They continue to dispute the view that Serbia’s support for Princip contributed to the outbreak of war. There is a lot of anxiety that a version of history might prevail, according to which the Serbs would be responsible for all ills in the Balkans after 1914. Princip is considered a national hero by the Serbs. While it is true that in 1914 as well as in 1991 nationalistic currents did exist in Serbia, an equating, however, is not eligible. Princip fought for a state, in which all South-Slav peoples were supposed to live together. By contrast, the Milošević regime preached Serb nationalism. Today Serbia plays a positive role in the process of regional reconciliation.

By Johannes Rueger

# NEWS & UPDATES

## MEMORY MAPPING IN KOSOVO

The “Memory Mapping Kosovo” (MMK) project aims to bring together a group of social scientists, students and civil society activists to explore practices and sites of memorialization in Kosovo and contrast them with established historical narratives and archive material, producing a new multi-perspective understanding of memorialization in Kosovo, which will contribute to a constructive Dealing with the past debate in Kosovo. In the period of January to June 2015, the MMK project will be focused on working on three out of five project ateliers, subjecting topics which will range from:

Memory sights built during the period of Ottoman Empire rule in Balkans (1878 - 1881) – “The league of Prizren”, (February 2015); Memory sites built during socialist Yugoslavia, but neglected after the 1999 war in Kosovo, “The miners monument” (April 2015); and Perspectives on (women) victims of sexual assault during the last war in Kosovo (June 2015).

By Korab Krasniqi

## MEMORINMOTION. A TOOLKIT TO ENGAGE YOUTH WITH THEIR HISTORY AND MEMORY

During the summer of 2014, *forumZFD*, Youth Initiative for Human Rights BiH, and the Anne Frank House started the project “MemorInmotion”: an educational toolkit that aims to engage young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond with their history and support them in critically reflecting on their public culture of remembrance. The toolkit is available as of December 2014 and will be distributed in 2015. This joint cooperation builds upon two projects of the partners, the “Memory Walk” project (YIHR BiH/AFH) and the “MONUMENTImotion” project (*forumZFD*), that enabled youth to present their own views on historical remembrance through film. Please contact Michele Parente ([parente@forumzfd.de](mailto:parente@forumzfd.de)) or Laura Boerhout ([l.boerhout@annefrank.nl](mailto:l.boerhout@annefrank.nl)) if you would like additional information.

By Laura Boerhout  
(Anne Frank House)

## NEXT ISSUE

The second issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* will deal with the topic “Heroes”. The authors will take a look into the concept of heroism and explore how a person becomes a hero. Furthermore the commemoration of heroes in the Balkans will be analyzed and we will ask the overarching questions if we need heroes at all.



# IMPRESSUM

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In the Western Balkans, the focus is on projects in the field of dealing with the past and on fostering dialogue between opposing parties. This includes school mediation projects, the support of civil society, or enhancing media capacities for a more constructive approach to dealing with the past. The program is financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

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## Disclaimer

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