Clashing Memories
The politics of remembrance at memorials of mass atrocities

ABSTRACT
Peacebuilding in post-conflict societies increasingly encompasses memorialization and practices of remembrance. Memorials that commemorate incidents of mass atrocity have been claimed as spaces for intervention by outside actors, and international support has often been decisive for their creation. While external involvement is driven by a desire for solid statements about the violent past, it is increasingly recognised that memorials are on the contrary sites for the ongoing production of meaning in the present; sites used both for mourning and for making politics. The paper outlines different narratives and practices around such memorials: e.g. the liberal, cosmopolitan desire for a template for remembering “genocide as distant suffering”, local stakeholders’ use of them as instruments for governance and hegemonic memory production, and “ordinary” peoples’ search for spaces for mourning and acknowledgement. These ongoing contestations are illustrated by presentations of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial, commemorating the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre, commemorating the genocide in Rwanda. The central aim of this enquiry is to deepen our understanding of the productive encounter between external actors’ desire for certain narratives and modes of remembering, and local processes of remembrance work. Ultimately, the paper aims to participate in a critical discussion on how external interventions in remembrance processes may impact on the building of sustainable peace.
The group of men are the only other visitors this morning. Together we walk through the cool exhibition halls as the sophisticated displays take us through the colonial past of Rwanda, to the onslaught of genocide. We look at the skulls and photos of victims. Listen to the recorded videos of survivors talking about their days in hiding and in flight. And then we watch the displays of other victims of other atrocities in other places and times – the Holocaust, Bosnia, Armenia. My fellow visitors are dressed in identical overalls. They belong to a local community unit, the leader explains. I ask him why they have come. It is part of the unit’s task, he says, to learn so that it never happens again. When I enter the sharp sunshine outside, two pink buses have pulled up. Western tourists on an adventure tour across Africa file into the museum, they have come to see what cannot be missed on the tour of Rwanda. Their guide knows the museum staff and jokes with them – they probably come here often.

Fieldnotes 2. Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2006
When I made the appointment with Sumreta, one of the leading persons in the Srebrenica widow’s association, she said that she did not want to meet for the interview at home but at the memorial site. When I arrive there are eleven women. They are all widows who have returned to Srebrenica and Sumreta must have phoned around last night after our talk. They seem to feel very much at home here in the meeting room and they have all come with the intention of telling me something. Instead of an interview the event turns into many testimonies of their right to this area and their pride at having it. Outside there is the exhibition of photographs, of opened mass graves, of twisted barbed wire used to backtie hands. A plastic doll in the mud. The black and white prints are beautiful. They tell a finished story. Later I accompany one of the women to her home, just a couple of hundred metres away from the monument. She tells of getting her chickens killed, of stones thrown at her windows. I am not safe at home, she says as she insists that we walk together back and forth on the gravel road in front of her neighbours (a display of international contacts as a security measure?). “But when I enter the monument I am safe.”

Introduction
Memorials as part of remembrance practices have emerged as increasingly important sites for struggles to come to terms with the past in societies emerging from war. Monuments,
memorials and museums have of late emerged as a visible and tangible type of redress and are rapidly produced in the post-conflict space. For national actors they are important symbols in order to consolidate a collective narrative for the new post-war state, and research indicate that victims of violence believe that memorialization is the second most valuable form of state reparations after financial compensation (Hamber et al 2010). External actors involved in interventions for peacebuilding and transitional justice have readily encompassed memorialization as an object for engagement and policy makers and experts on post-conflict peacebuilding tend to stress the role commemoration practices play for social cohesion (Kent 2011). Demands for public memorialization have become part and parcel of demands for truth and justice and truth commissions usually recommend the development of memorials as one measure of transitional justice (Jelin 2007: 139). Hence memorialization has been seamlessly added to the well-known prescription of transitional justice: bring justice to the victims, create reconciliation, support nation-building, and prevent a repetition of the crimes. The cry of “never again” forms the core of this engagement, meaning to draw a line between an atrocious past and a peaceful future.

While the belief in such solid statements about the past may be seductive, this paper takes an interest in memorials, monuments and commemorative museums as spaces for contentions and disjunctures, used both for mourning and for making politics. It understands commemoration as a political process as certain memories (and not others) are spun into a coherent story, which legitimises and de-legitimises certain actions (Zehfuss 2006). The paper hence takes as its point of departure Gillis’ seminal insight that “commemorative activity is by definition social and political, for it involves the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of intense contest, struggle, and in some instances, annihilation” (Gillis 1994: 5). Rather than solid statements about the past, they are enactments and embodiments of hegemonic power struggles and to understand how they may relate to claims of contributing to “social cohesion” means asking questions around why, how and by whom these sites of remembrance are used.

As this paper will attempt to show, an interest in memorials may help develop a critical gaze on peacebuilding interventions in general. It forms a locus from which to study the convergence of identity, memory, place and politics. Although there is a growing interest in commemoration, the framework tends to be fairly shortsighted and static (Hamber et al 2010: 400). While across the social sciences a “rush to memory” has been noted over the last

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2 For example, one of the leading institutions in the field, International Center for Transitional Justice, defines memorialization to be “an important component of a holistic transitional justice approach (ICTJ, 2010).
decade, it has somehow been treated as an add-on to international relations (Bell 2010). The standpoint here is rather that, as Edkins argues, that memory and hence temporality, is not to be added to the study of politics, but understood to be at very centre of how political authority and power is constituted (Edkins 2010: 101, see also Bell 2006:15; Edkins 2003: 57ff; Zehfuss 2006: 228).

The paper outlines clashes between different narratives and practices around the physical embodiments of memory(ies) where trauma is re-inscripted. While commemoration practices involve a whole range of activities for example erecting monuments, flag-flying and parading (Edkins 2003, 17; Williams 2007: 12), the memorial museum has here been picked out as particular interesting material marker of memories. It is an intriguing representational space, defined by Lefebvres as “planned spaces” where a particular form of process are meant to take place: “the loci of meaning in a culture” (cited in Williams 2007: 78). Giddens, writing on cultural elements, argues “(a) society’s culture comprises both intangible aspects – the beliefs, ideas and values which form the content of culture – and tangible aspects – the objects, symbols or technology which represent that content (Giddens 2001: 22).

The paper maps out some of the functions and uses of memorial museums in post-conflict societies. It attempts to read the liberal, cosmopolitan desire for a template for remembering “genocide as distant suffering”, local stakeholders’ use of them as instruments for governance and hegemonic memory production, and “ordinary” peoples’ search for spaces for mourning and acknowledgement. They are sites for an ongoing “friction” (Tsing 2005) between localized, national and transnational desires productive of often conflicting moral narratives that aim for temporal coherence but often produce unintended outcomes. Actors in this process include mourners, international donors, local and national political stakeholders, the peacebuilding international community and tourist entrepreneurs and their tourists, and possibly other global consumers as the meaning they hold travel across time and space. I discuss them as intensely territorial sites for the production of collective memory to as communities are imagined anew. I also take a particular interest in postconflict memorials as a surface for projection, and reflection, of the liberal peacebuilders’ desires and rationale that an increasing number of transnational actors take part in - where the aim is rather to de-territorialise the memory of the atrocities. The arguments are illustrated by examples from two sites that were developed in response to two of the most atrocious wars of the 1990’s, briefly introduced in the fieldnotes above: the genocide memorial in Srebrenica in BiH and the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Rwanda.
The paper is in three parts. The first part attempts to conceptually disentangle different uses of memorial museums and maps the memorial museum as a site for: local, collective memory-making; cosmopolitan memory-making; “dark tourism”; and private mourning. The second part introduces the two sites in focus for this study and brings up examples of the above functions. The third and concluding part summarises and reflects upon how a critical understanding of memorials may deepen our understanding of the friction between local, national and transnational stakeholders in peacebuilding endeavours.

The paper uses a broad brush to paint the narrative “memoryscape” that museums create. It is to be read as the first step in an endeavour to explore sites of remembrance theoretically and empirically in relation to peacebuilding interventions. 3

1. Remembering and Forgetting at Memorial Museums: Actors and Narratives

*Producers of Collective Memory:* 4 *Museums as Territorial Sites for Power Claims in the Present*

What to remember and what to forget is an urgent struggle at the heart of the post-conflict process. In post-conflict states fraught with ongoing divisionism, memorial museums are important for stakeholders who aim to construct new hegemonic collective memories. While spaces and places of memory have historically been central for the formation of the nation state (Bartelson 2010: 37), in many post-conflict states emerging from “new wars” there are multiple and often opposing narratives of the war, constructed by the same sectarian or ethnopolitical forces that were drivers of the conflict. “Memory entrepreneurs” such as intellectuals, media, politicians and pressure groups participate in a struggle to define the past (Bartelson 2006; 48f; Sorabji 2006: 2). In this struggle, “(h)eritage has come to be used as ‘proof’ of the past, tradition, belonging, and therefore proof also of rights of place, representation and political voice” (Isar et al 2011: 9).

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3 The ambition is to develop this paper further by adding empirical research on how different agents at these sites take part in the friction and produce different outcomes – agents such as mourners, museum directors, international donors and government officials. Fieldwork in Rwanda will be carried out in the autumn of 2012.

4 Ideas of “collective memory (as first introduced by sociologist Halbwachs in xx) have rightly been critisiced for essentialising memory and the group. I agree that it is more conducive to understand memory as an active process in which “… remembering is distributed and shared among individuals ‘in the group’” (Wertsch and Billingsley 2011: 30). Still I will use the term here as it is widely accepted to mean the widely shared stories about a common past.
Two main functions of memorial museums as producers of collective memory (and hence of identity) are noted here. Firstly, they are important as producers of a new narrative of victimhood. Victimhood is a powerful platform from which to make political and moral claims. It is partly produced through the “negative heritage,” meaning museums and other sites of commemoration that do not celebrate heroes and glorious moments in a collective’s past, but rather inscribes suffering (Meskell 2010: 161). As Benedict Anderson has remarked, “…most of the deepest symbols of nations are symbols of death.” (cited in Williams 2007: 43). As the victim position becomes more and more significant it also becomes the position from which one can make claims. Memorials and monuments are powerful containers of these messages.

Secondly, the memorial museum also makes a territorial (re)claim. Sometimes places of memory are located at the very sites that “bore witness” to the atrocities, for example a concentration camp, a killing field, or torture chambers. The building of a museum or other forms of commemoration practices at these sites can be read as a way for the victims to make a physical - as well as a moral - reclaim. This is especially pertinent in contemporary warfare, where crimes such as ethnic cleansing, systematic gender-based violence, and genocide are tactics used to remove certain groups of people from territories. Space holds special meaning after wars with central aims to cleanse territory and thus the physical environment turns into a narrator of specific versions of the past (Mehta and Chatterji 2001, 208). Ethnic cleansing is such a frightening crime precisely because its very aim is completeness. Ignatieff has described the process compellingly: "Ethnic war isolates aggressors from the truth of their own actions. If ethnic cleansing is successful, it removes victims and leaves the victor in possession of a terrain of undisputed truth. Ethnic cleansing eradicates the accusing truth of the past” (Ignatieff 1997: 177). Hence to build a museum or to put up a monument is part of reversing the ethnic cleansing. Consequently, just as cultural monuments and religious symbols and other lieux de memoires (Nora 1996) often are targeted in contemporary warfare as part of ethnic cleansing, so are monuments of reclaim also targeted in continued polarized political struggles in the post-conflict order, and the vandalisation of commemorative memorials is prevalent (e.g. Jelin 2007: 148, Mannergren Selimovic 2010: 172, visegrad xx).

Producer of Cosmopolitan memories

In sharp contrast to the territorial claims that memory entrepreneurs in the local make through memorials and museums, stands the often simultaneous aim of constructing a “de-territorialised cosmopolitan memory” (Levy and Sznaider 2006). Over the last couple of
decades a globally recognised template has emerged for how the gravest crimes against humanity of our time should be remembered. At the centre stands the imperative of “never again” – humankind is to learn about the atrocities and practice “de-territorialized compassion” (ibid 2006: 181) as we understand that the suffering of the individual victim transcends national borders. As Levy and S Sznaider show, it was the Holocaust and its aftermath of legal procedure that lay the grounds for how to remember and how to commemorate the dead, practices developed in conjunction with a global human rights regime.

Memorial museums have emerged as a particular site for the production of such memories. In memorial museums across the world, a common strategy is being formed, for example through the network of “Sites of Conscience” which make particular demands on what is to be remembered and how (International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience). Design and messages are also becoming streamlined as increasingly donors turn to get involved in commemoration and outside experts are called in to design memorial projects in post-conflict states (Barsalou and Baxter 2007: 2). The particular atrocities performed in each site are fitted into a larger narrative, and rather function as examples of the master narrative. Many actors take part in spreading the message of de-territorialised compassion. It is a potent narrative platform as has been discovered by many actors in the post-conflict context, for example victim advocacy groups as well as political leaders who want to present an easily comprehensible story of suffering (eg. Conway 2009; Williams 2007; personal interveiws). It has also particularly well fitted liberal peacebuilders who see the urgent need for a stabilizing, nation-building narrative for the fractured postconflict state. The “gelled” de-territorialised story not only avoids the highly complex local remembering practices as discussed above, it also supports the overall liberal peacebuilding discourse of temporally drawing a line between the contentious past and a present of “global shared suffering”. Further it underpins the logic of interventionism as the suffering of individuals is understood as the responsibility of all mankind. By supporting memorial museums, sometimes even constructing them or running them, external peacebuilding actors may use the museums as sites for projecting their own desires of liberal peace.

Whether these practices will eventually turn some of these atrocities into “global memories” remains to be seen. There is a growing debate on whether in our age of globalization global memories are emerging; memories escaping from the time and space limits of the communal group or the nation-state. For example Wendt discusses whether a “constituency for cosmopolitan democracy” may be produced through “transnational
memories (cited in Bell 2010: 17) and as we saw above, Levy and Sznaider argue that in fact the Holocaust has already turned into such a cosmopolitan memory (Levy and Sznaider 2006). One may ask whether the increased prevalence of memorial museums may open up for the travel across time and space, as these memories (of course as selectively produced as more limited, collective memories) will be recognized by an increasing number of people. As celebrities and statesmen flock to memorial museums and as global media consumers easily digest such events, it may at least be true that these particular sites become inscribed in a growing number of peoples ‘consciousness across the globe, as Angeline Jolie poses at Potocari-Srebrenica memorial site, and Sarkozy prays at the Genocide Memorial Centre in Kigali. What the implications are for the building of sustainable peace is little known.

*Producing Dark Tourism – The Outside Gaze*

Tourism linked to peacebuilding is a topic that deserves more than the limited attention it has so far received. The presence of tourism and its actors and agencies in the post-conflict site has consequences for peacebuilding and how the moral narrative is received, how individual mourners are affected and how successful the memory entrepreneurs in the local are. Research is however limited. What we do know is that tourism to sites of commemoration has increased rapidly and it is even claimed that “war-related tourism attractions are the largest single category known.” (Smith cited in Widenhoft Murphy 2010: 537).

Sites of commemorations are often tailored in order to meet the expectations of tourists visiting and it is probably true that increased tourism is intimately linked to the production of global memory as discussed above, as tourists are transnational carriers of stories. But the tourism to places of death and disaster forms what is often called “dark tourism” and critics argue that it commodifies genocide and other atrocities. When reading websites that advertise tours to such places, one is prone to agree with the criticism. For example the “Balkan Roadtrip” company advertises a tour in the following way: “The capital, Sarajevo then beckons with its Turkish heart and Bohemian nightlife. Another day is spent absorbing the powerful story of the Sarajevo Tunnel and the Srebrenica massacre … Finally, spend 2 days in the Bosnian mountains, staying in a lodge-style hotel whilst trying the excursions on offer such as horse-riding, 4x4 off-roading, hiking and mountain-biking.” (http://www.balkanroadtrip.com/bosnia-adventure.html). A similar company in Rwanda advertises a ”3 Days Gorilla & Genocide memorial tour” (www.rwandagorillasafari.com /rwanda/gorilla-genocide-memorial-tour.html).
Of course, just because this is the way tourists are addressed, it does not necessarily mean that they themselves equate gorillas with genocide or war crimes with 4x4 off-roading. Certainly, many visitors get a rush from seeing skulls in neat piles, or enjoy the sentimental moment of looking at dead children’s little sandals. With access to the whole world at the internet, the “authentic” experience of being in the very place of horror, may be exciting. But there are many, many others who come to learn and who have a genuine interest for the conflictual past of the country they are visiting. Nonetheless, in trying to understand the friction produced around narratives of the memorial museum, we need to critically examine what is produced by this outside gaze on the atrocities, the victims and the survivors. While tourism often is flagged as an important tool to bolster the economy, tourism may also cement certain narratives and polarise society as it reproduces certain collective memories and not others (Widenhoft Murphy 2010: 537). On the other hand, Lisle asks whether the tourist may in fact be a subject that may have the possibility to question and destabilize official and narrow stories of the past (Lisle xx).

**Producing Space for Mourning**

A central reason for memorial museums is often said to be the survivors, who through memorialization will be aided in getting “closure” (as the quasi-psychological language often used in the reconciliation discourse puts it). The private stories of trauma, loss and surviving are often used by the museums as a powerful way of personalizing the message of “never again” and giving visitors insights into the individual consequences of genocide or other forms of atrocities. Many museums use survivors and guides, others show often very emotional, filmed interviews. These tales may be powerful support of local collective memories - as well as bolster the cosmopolitan arguments of “never again.”

As will be glimpsed in the examples from Srebrenica and Kigali, the motives of the mourners themselves for engaging in memorial museums often seem to be mixed. It is indicated that also for individual mourners, the notion of territory is of great importance, as a gravesite, a physical place to come to visit. They may at the same time resist that the memory of their beloved ones is used for political or religious reasons, and one needs to explore further how individuals negotiate or resist the dominant narratives in a divided context. As many of these mourners also are victims of cleansing tactics or genocide, their motives may also be entangled with private claims to security or territory as outlined above.

One more aspects concern the continued negative consequences of the conflict that survivors have to tackle. As many of these people still suffer the hardship from the violence,
in the form of socioeconomic insecurity, the recounting of the atrocities as an example to
learn from, according to the “never again” paradigmatic story might be, as Huysen cautions
about the Holocaust memorials, a ”veil covering ongoing atrocities” (Huysen 2003: 19).
Some victims continue to live the consequences of the “dreadful event” at the same time as
tourists are contemplating their pictures in a museum which aims to portray their experiences
as belonging to the past.

2. Places of Remembering: Srebrenica and Kigali

This section of the paper presents two memorial museums that illustrate how the above
outlined narratives and actors interrelate. While the contexts of Rwanda and BiH to a great
extent vary and the roles of the memorial museums differ, they also share some central
characteristics.

Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial Centre

The memorial centre just outside the small town of Srebrenica in eastern BiH came into being
as a result of international action combined with survivor advocacy for a place of
reconciliation and remembering of a crime “against mankind.” Today it is a highly contested
site that plays a central role for the ongoing struggles around victim hegemony not only in
BiH but also in the region at large. Here the conflictual post-conflict order of Bosnia-
Herzegovina is played out as well as the international administration’s desires for making
permanent peace.

The memorial consists of two parts; one is the burial site with its rows and rows of
graves, the mosque and praying centre and the slabs of stones with the names of all the buried
have been engraved, a meeting room with a photographic exhibition. The other is a Memorial
room in the building of a former battery factory, at the time a UN Base. A film is shown and
20 objects displayed that used to belong to 20 victims. The monument was erected to
commemorate the genocide in July 1995 when more than 8,000 men and boys were killed by
Bosnian Serb forces. The UN soldiers at the Potocari base watched as Europe’s largest single
war crime since the second world war took place. Only some months after the Srebrenica
events, peace was internationally brokered, and Bosnian human rights groups and survivors
started quite soon to campaign about a memorial, and the issue was put on the political agenda
and debated in media. As Sahovic describes in detail in his account of the historical
development of the monument, the memorial was a contested issue from the very beginning
(Sahovic 2010). Immediately a struggle began whether it should be in the Federation or in actual Srebrenica which was now part of Republica Srpska.\(^5\) A survey was conducted among survivors by the organization of “Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves” in which more than 80 percent wanted the memorial to be situated in Potocari. But Republika Srpska political leaders protested vehemently and obstructed all attempts to reach a decision. There were also strong Bosniac voices who argued that the monument should be in the Federation, closer to Sarajevo. The OHR (Office of the High Representative, the international administration in BiH with executive powers to oversee the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement) said at the time that they were not to get involved until there was a domestic agreement. But in October 2000, after years of stalemate, the OHR moved in and used its executive powers. In the written decision of the OHR it was argued that to delay any further would be “an affront to humanity”. The memorial site will become the “means of bringing reconciliation to the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will in turn promote the return of displaced persons and refugees and permanent peace.” (www.ohr.int/decisions).

The survivor organisation Women of Srebrenica put forward a slightly different set of objectives for the memorial in their plea for it in the main Bosnian newspaper Oslobodjenje. Here the memorial was framed according to the global theme, especially stressing the failure of the international community to live up to this discourse: “Srebrenica – the global anti-war center” a place that would contain the “memory of our children and our dearest … with the intention to bury all dead in one place, but not in a common grave … to demonstrate the inability of the international community to protect… (cited in Sahovic, 2010). The global theme has then emerged time and again, for example in the inaugural speech by Bill Clinton who in his speech urged that Srebrenica should be a global reminder to all humanity (www.youtube.com/xxx). It is a theme repeated in most publicized visits to the centre for example by celebrities such as Mia Farrow and Angelina Jolie, whose messages are immediately fed into global social media. Further, the international involvement has continued in the form of donations from the Netherlands and the U.K. to the memorial room, and through the regular visits by international dignitaries.

While the process towards forming a “closed” “cosmopolitan memory” of the Srebrenica genocide has proceeded, political contentions in the local and national and regional

\(^5\) According to the peace agreement that followed months after the genocide, BiH was split into two decentralized entities, Republika Srpska and the Bosnian-Croat Federation.
context seem to intensify. The political struggle whether to accept or deny Srebrenica is a central feature in post-war BiH as it becomes a point of moral power claims for local stakeholders in the conflict. To deny the genocide has been a tactic for gaining support among many Bosnian Serbs. In Serbia moderate politicians reached the tactic discussion to accept it, but the immediate questioning of the genocide of newly elected Serbian president Nikolic shows that genocide denial still holds political currency. The conflicting stories come to a head every year on the 11 July when commemorations are held at the memorial, centred around the burial of victims. Bosnian authorities have been accused of manipulating the process, as found remains are withheld in order to create maximum attention at the commemoration day. Local protests are staged the day after in the close-by village of Kravica, where thousands of Bosnian Serbs together with the Republika Srpska political elite congregate on July 12 to celebrate the “liberation of Srebrenica” as well as mourn the Bosnian Serbs killed there during the war. There are hardly anyone among the Bosnian Serbs in the area who have visited the genocide memorial, and to do that would lead to with social ostracisation, as Bosnian Serb peace activists in the area testify (personal interviews, Sarajevo 17 Nov 2011). The situation puts a nagging question to the fore: how does one incorporate plural narratives, in order to allow for more than one story, if the counterhegemonic story involves revisionism and genocide denial?

Survivors of the Srebrenica genocide have developed into a strong advocacy group with a high national as well as international profile. Their advocacy follows two strands, as already exemplified above: to link up the events in Srebrenica to the globalised human rights discourse and hence frame it as an affront to all mankind. Also, they are adamant to show how the international community failed to protect them, and see the memorial also as a monument to this (the choice of Potocari and the former UN bases as the iste of the memorial is the most overwhelming statement of this). The strength of this aim was demonstrated when a group of widows stopped former Dutch UN soldiers from entering the memorial to which they had come in order to express their regret (Nettlefield 2010).

The message of reconciliation, which was given as the main aim for the OHR intervention to create the monument, was absent in their rationale. Rather, as exemplified in the fieldnotes that opened this paper, the space of the monument held an intense symbolic meaning. The mourners and survivors were returnees to the town of Srebrenica, the place from which they had been driven away according to the genocidal logic of the Bosnian Serb forces. The territory of the monument was a place they said now “belong to us.” As they often were threatened by neighbours, it was a place of physical security as well. Even so, that
security was also under threat - in July 2005, six days before the memorial service, two bombs were found on the site, containing 35 kg of explosives (Williams 2007: 120). At my own latest visit to the monument (August 2011) large banners with offensive messages were hanged on private grounds adjacent to the monument.

Finally, the fact that the memorial is also a burial site means that it holds an intense personal meaning for many survivors that transcends the ongoing contestations. For example Amira, whose husband had been located and had been buried there. She was still waiting to find her son. As she tended the grave of her husband she explained:

“Every time there are these exhumations I always go to look for my son. I remember very clearly what he was wearing, I know exactly the trousers. So if only I could find him I would be very happy. That would be happiness. So now when I go to Srebrenica I come her and I sit next to the grave of my husband. I talk to him and I say, because it is a beautiful day, everything looks clean, wonderful, I say to him it is a nice tombstone, you have nice neighbours, just think of those in the mass graves, how horrible that is. So all I wish for is to find the remains of my son and have a proper burial for him.” (personal interview, May 2006.)

_Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre_

Her words are echoed by one of the survivors of the Rwandan genocide, who regularly visits the Kigali Genocide Memorial and whose family was obliterated in the genocide. For her, the memorial is a physical site for remembrance and for connecting with the lost past.

I come here because I want to say hi to my relatives. For me, I am at home here, with my family.

She talks about her relationship to the memorial in a dvd produced by the British Aegis Trust Fund who in conjunction with the municipality of Rwandan capital Kigali has developed the memorial. More than 250,000 bodies are buried in the grounds of the museum which was opened on the 10th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide in April 2004. The Centre includes three permanent exhibitions, the largest of which documents the genocide. There is also a children's memorial and an exhibition on the history of genocides around the world, all constructed and designed by Aegis (www.aegis.org). The memorial is one of many that dot the Rwandan landscape. Some of them are small, constructed on the initiative of the
people in a village who found a place to bury their dead, others are government initiated and are ambitiously laid out. The genocide was the most brutal event in modern time. About 800,000 people, mainly tutsis, were killed during a period of just three months, killings executed by neighbours and even relatives, urged on by hutu extremist leaders.

The woman cited above clearly points out the individual use, and need, of the monument. Indeed, to be a place for mourning is one of the stated aims of the memorial. Further the museum’s task, as stated on the website and by the Aegis trust fund chairman is that the museum should be there for visitors to learn about the genocide and f what we can do to prevent it from happening again, as well as to “strengthen trust and ensure permanent peace,” as expressed by the Aegis trust chairman Stephen Smith (Aegis Trust Fund 2005).

This presentation ignores major contentions in the post-genocide state of Rwanda. The museum’s memory work must be understood in relation to the ongoing construction of a post-genocide national narrative which involves a closely orchestrated selection of memories and the construction of a collective identity, based on civic identity rather than ethnic identity (Buckley-Zistel 2009: 31). Buckley-Zistel also points to the top-down nature of the government’s history teaching and the censorship on alternative accounts and argues that there is a gap between Rwandans’ sense of ethnic identity and the central power’s interpretation of the past. Importantly, the government selectively forgets the atrocities committed by the RPA (the then rebel forces turned national army). As Human Rights Watch has remarked, “to discuss crimes committed by the RPA is equated with holding a “genocide ideology”” (HRW 2008). Thomson argues that the Rwanda state apparatus is used forcefully in order to make citizens step into line and take part in the specific memory work of this tale. “For Rwandans who try to step outside the prescribed roles of national unity and reconciliation, the reaction from the government and its agents is quick and relentless: imprisonment without charge, disappearance, intimidation, even death (Thomson 2009: 163). She also points out that the social stigma at community level may also be very painful if people do not concur to the official narrative: “…gossip, character assassination, denunciation, shunning, and outcasting” (ibid).

As part of the nation-building project, commemoration is mandatory. It takes place once a year for one week in early April which is the time of the beginning of the genocide in 1994. It is a time for the digging up of mass graves and burial ceremonies are held. Speeches, testimonies, theatrical performances dominate public space including media, and overnight vigils are held. The burial ceremony at a chosen site is led by the president and the whole ceremony is broadcast on state television (Breed 2011: 246). The Kigali Genocide Memorial
stands at the centre of the remembering and provides a clear moral narrative of perpetrators and victims. The centrality of this narrative silences other stories “in the margin,” more precisely the stories of atrocities committed by the RPF, against hutu in Rwanda as well as in DRC. The genocide memorial closely follows the official fiction – that national unity and harmony was destroyed by colonialism, which then led to the genocide. The museum is used as a site for this hegemonic teaching, illustrated by the “community unit” in the fieldnotes in the beginning of the paper, who go there every year to learn. In the interview with one of them I did not learn anything about what the consequences might have been if the members had abstained from taking part, and I can only speculate at this point that such a choice was not a viable one.

Turning now to the museum as a site for the production of global memories, this is indeed another of the stated aims of the site. The ready-made boards were flown in from Great Britain and they follow a close trend of story-telling according to the “never again” discourse of the human rights regime. The text for all three exhibitions was printed in three languages, designed in the UK at the Aegis head office by their design team, and shipped to Rwanda to be installed (www.aegis.org). Also at the opening of this museum, Bill Clinton was the main international dignitary, and his pray for mankind not to forget was similar to the plea he made in Srebrenica. Since the opening, the museum has turned into a mandatory stop for all kinds of international visitors, from tourists to embassy personnel, celebrities and statesmen.

3. Concluding Discussion

The above conceptualisation and empirical illustrations have served to show the multiple meanings that places of memories can hold. The memorial museums in Srebrenica and Kigali are clearly sites for conflicting desires and motives. I have shown the role they play in the new collective narratives struggle for hegemony, as platforms for a universalized human rights discourse with the aim of producing cosmopolitan memories, as places for “dark tourism,” as territorialities that are (re)claimed by those driven away, and finally as spaces for private mourning by survivors. Several actors, using various platforms for agency, have been made visible, such as major peacebuilding institutions (OHR), local advocacy groups of survivors, tour operators, government policymakers, international ngo’s (Aegis trust fund), statesmen, “famous people” tourists and of course the private mourners.

There are several strands in the above overview that can be picked up for further investigation, e g:
• Museums as a platform for deterritorialised stories of goodness, at the same time that they are part of highly territorialised struggles around space and time.
• The traveling of global “cosmopolitan” norms and how they are used by local actors to further their own aims.
• The desire for a private space of mourning and how individuals may feel co-opted by dominant hegemonic narratives, and concomitant resistance strategies.
• The role of tourism – how tourists as actors from the “outside” may destabilize the narrow and exclusionist narratives that are generated by some of these memorials.
• Further theoretical exploration of the intimate linkages between the idea of the cosmopolitan global memory and the reconciliation discourse, and how to situate this strand of thinking in relation to time and space.

I hope that the overview presented in this paper has convinced the reader that memorial museums (as well as other sites of remembrance) are intriguing spaces to study as part of peacebuilding processes. Curiously they have not been much studied from this perspective. Williams contends that traditional museum studies have kept away from the “sites of conscience” – maybe out of reverence for the difficult subject – and while transitional justice scholars are starting to take an interest in commemoration, there is (as so often is the case) a blatant lack of empirical studies that investigate the narrative practices of actors outlined above (Conway 2009 and Kent 2010 are exceptions).

As critical peace research takes a growing interest in plural conceptions of peace and how the encounter between international peacebuilders and local actors is played out (e.g. Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond 2010, 2011), studies of memorial museums can provide interesting insights into how different strands of discourses concerned with peace, identity, memory and place intertwine, and are resisted or transformed in a process of “friction.” The overall aim of this project, as stated in the beginning of the paper, is to understand how this friction may add to a fragmentation of society, or on the contrary, aid in building an inclusive story of the past. An empirical study of this process, as is the next planned step in this research endeavour, will help to further identify and understand what such encounters produce. On this note I end this paper, and continue the research process, with the urging from Meskell who asks us not to be put off by “the fears surrounding dissonance and fracturing of memory: they are the hallmarks of trauma culture and the necessary constituents for a broader social understanding” (Meskell 2010: 161).
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