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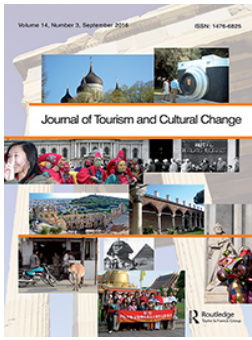
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## Tourism and the ‘martyred city’: memorializing war in the former Yugoslavia

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### ABSTRACT

The present contribution aims to propose a definition of what is often referred to as a ‘martyred city’, a notion widely used in the media and the public sphere, but still largely understudied in academia. By looking at two cities in the former Yugoslavia – Sarajevo and Vukovar – this article presents the way in which a place can be associated with the notion of martyrdom through memorial sites and practices, such as war museums and tourism. The ‘martyred city’ is a way to memorialize past traumatic events, but also a means to achieve diverse agendas and objectives. It is finally stated that the distinction between ‘victims’ and ‘martyrs’ is often blurred, and a shift from the former to the latter can be observed.

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### Representing martyrdom

After or during violent events such as wars, sieges or bombings, certain places around the world have been designated as ‘martyred cities’. Sites marked by a traumatic past – Hiroshima, Auschwitz, Guernica, Verdun, or more recently Fallujah in Iraq and Homs in Syria – have been labelled as such in the media or in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> Martyrdom can also be expressed and experienced through material sites like memorials and museums, as well as through cultural practices such as commemorative ceremonies, artistic performances or tourism.

The notion of ‘martyred city’ generally implies the dissemination of a message, often linked to the mantra ‘never again’ (like in Auschwitz), but can also be related to more concrete narratives, for instance calling into question the whole nuclear technology altogether (like in Hiroshima). Furthermore, a critical issue is often linked to the designation of a group (national, ethnic, religious) as martyr, most of the time in opposition to one or more groups considered as ‘enemy’ or ‘perpetrator’.

However, if the ‘martyred city’ designation has been largely mobilized in general media, a more attentive analysis of this notion in academia has yet to be undertaken. This contribution aims to fill this gap by proposing a conceptual definition, from an anthropological and geographical perspective, and by looking at the way in which some places in former Yugoslavia have been associated with the notion of martyrdom after the 1990s wars.

Furthermore, special attention will be given to the resurging tourism sector in the region, emphasizing the roles of narratives and representations of martyrdom in national and local tourism promotion. Finally, this contribution aims to demonstrate that the distinction between victimhood and martyrdom is often blurred, allowing certain 'memorial entrepreneurs' to present victims as martyrs.

When we look closely at the designation of 'martyred city' in the media, we can note that it usually refers to places at war as opposed to post-war settings. In examining the memorialization process in two sites in ex-Yugoslavia – Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vukovar in Croatia – the main objective is to describe the ways in which those places are still represented as 'martyred cities' even after the armed conflict is over. In another geographical context, the case of Oradour-sur-Glane in France is a paradigmatic example, as it was officially named a 'martyred village' after the Second World War and the infamous massacre that took place there.<sup>2</sup> However, this designation refers to the preserved and uninhabited ruins, not to the new settlements built after the war next to the destroyed village. This is a fundamental difference when analyzing this dynamic in the context of living environments, like Sarajevo or Vukovar.

Those two places, and even more the symbols that they constitute now, are largely part of the founding myths present in Bosnian and Croatian independence narratives, in a similar vein to the way in which a village like Oradour was mobilized in discourses on post-war France. But unlike Oradour, these places are still inhabited, confirming that a 'lieu de mémoire' (Nora, 1997) can also constitute a living environment. In the context of Bosnia and Croatia, different national groups are sharing the same territory, causing numerous social conflicts. Therefore, any analysis of these martyred cities needs to take into account the division context and the nationalist discourses present in the former Yugoslavia.

### ***Martyrdom and tourism***

Tourism is far from being apolitical. Many scholars have already underlined the way in which tourism narratives can be vectors for ideology (Alneng, 2002; Moynagh, 2008; Naef, 2014; Pretes, 2003; Rodriguez, 2014). Rodriguez emphasizes the way General Franco exploited tourism during the Spanish war to represent Republican guilt in opposition to Francoist victimhood. Referring to the town of Guernica, she highlights the way this symbol of destruction was used in Francoist patriotic discourse and mobilized in opposition to Republican denunciations:

Franco and Bolín<sup>3</sup> diffused the idea that Republicans burned the city in a ground attack and made people believe in the guilt of the opponent. [...] To underline the providential nature of Franco's war, those visits were a means to develop religious and patriotic rituals [...].<sup>4</sup> (Rodriguez, 2014, p. 2013)

Guernica, now an important symbol of war, was represented as a 'martyred city' in order to serve Franco propaganda directly after its destruction, with tourism serving as the means to do so.

Yet, if several authors have included the notion of 'martyred city' in their work, its close examination is still very limited and totally absent in academic tourism studies. In the broad field of memory studies, Oliver-Smith (1986) used it as a title for his book, yet without analyzing it. He looked at the 'rebirth' of the town of Yungay in central Peru,

which was destroyed by a huge avalanche that killed thousands of inhabitants in the 1970s. However, the cause of the destruction was natural and the issues related to its memorialization were undoubtedly quite distinct from those following human-caused tragedies such as wars. In this context, Bennett-Farmer (2000) conducted a historical study of the aftermath of the massacre in Oradour, looking at commemoration and legal matters and offering some very important insights on the representation of victimhood in French narratives.

In the former Yugoslavia, the 'martyred city' designation was widely used during the wars of the 1990s, especially when Sarajevo and Vukovar were besieged. A decade later, Bosnia and Eastern Croatia became paradigmatic case studies in general post-war research, and this analogy was occasionally introduced. Sepic, Biondic, and Delic (2005) analyzed the reconstruction of Slavonia and described the town of Vukovar after the siege as 'a martyr-town, a phantom town, a symbol of all the war destruction in Croatia'.

Yet the most important work related to the notion of 'martyred city' is without doubt Baillie's research on Vukovar's religious heritage. In her description of the city after the war in Croatia, Baillie (2013, p. 120) challenges the distinction between 'wartime' and 'peacetime', asserting that the place lingers in the limbo of conflict time illustrated by its persisting divisions and tensions: 'Vukovar's post-"reintegration" memorials have sought to remake and re-narrate the political landscape of the city – to express the Croat discourse of "victory through victimhood" in order to negate the RSK<sup>5</sup> discourse of liberation.' She adds that Vukovar became a 'martyred city' for the whole Croatian nation: 'a cityscape sacrificed for the creation of the nation; an urban landscape "hallowed by the blood" of victims and defenders' (Baillie, 2013, p. 300).

### ***Defining the 'martyred city'***

The conceptual framework that I propose here aims to highlight three distinct but inter-related dynamics. The first involves a memoryscape focused on a specific collective trauma, such as a massacre, war or siege. In other words, museums, memorials and other symbolic representations are largely oriented towards a historical and violent event. Secondly, some places tend to be designated as symbols of these events and mobilized in national and popular narratives.

Auschwitz is generally presented as a paradigmatic example when looking at the symbolization of a collective trauma. Assman (2010) for instance demonstrates how the material site of Auschwitz, after becoming a global symbol of the Holocaust, becomes disconnected from its historical context. Quoting Marchart et al., she notes that this symbolization process can lead to the site's instrumentalization: 'As the process of universalization of the Holocaust has emptied the symbol of its particular historical meaning, it can be used to legitimate everything including its opposite' (in: Assman, 2010, p. 114). For Nora, war, totalitarianism, genocides and crimes against humanity became dominant images in what he describes as the 'age of memory', adding that Auschwitz memorialization leads to what is now considered a 'duty of memory'.<sup>6</sup> As one can see, the material space of a traumatic and violent event can evolve into a symbolical space, a process that implies their disconnection: the symbolic Auschwitz spreading far beyond the material one.

Finally, the third dimension of the 'martyred city' is attached to the notion of martyrdom in opposition, for instance, to the one of resistance. Doss (2010) states that victims

are now commemorated more than heroes. Yet the main issue of how to define heroes, victims or martyrs remains. Bennett-Farmer notes that the notion of martyrdom often implies a lack of resistance capacity in the face of the enemy. In her view, that is how Oradour victims were presented, and by extension, the whole image of France propagated in accordance with the memorialization of this massacre: '[...] the term martyr reflected the overwhelming belief that France had been powerless in the face of the Nazis' (Bennett-Farmer, 2000, p. 88).

### ***Victim or martyr?***

The link between martyrdom and lack of resistance capacity needs to be questioned. It seems that victimhood and martyrdom, often used to convey the same meaning, can nevertheless imply distinct representations. The notion of martyrdom denotes a form of will and an involvement for a cause, introducing the idea of individuals scarifying themselves for this cause (e.g. independence). In opposition, victimhood implies a lack of the capacity to resist and, above all, an absence of choice. Furthermore, Bennett-Farmer (2000, p. 88) also demonstrates that, in the case of Oradour, martyrdom was linked with a form of power associated with 'moral superiority': 'Martyrdom, which suggests physical weakness but moral superiority, implies a sacred cause – in this case, the cause of the nation.'

Riaño-Alcalá (2006, p. 123) defines the notion of martyrdom as 'an act of dying understood as a sacrifice made for the freedom and liberty of others'. She quotes Zulaika (1995) who presents the martyr as an 'activist' ready to give his own life as a genuine expression of commitment to his people. The myth of the martyr would be 'a historical model of masculine heroism that locates its roots in a mythology of sacrifice, and is supported by actions'. In opposition, civilian victims, like those in Oradour, were killed regardless of their actions or commitment and thus cannot be included in this definition of martyrdom, as it implies a form of agency.

It is stated here that dynamics involved in the 'martyred city' can lead to a shift from the status of victimhood to one of martyrdom in order to fulfil specific objectives, like presenting the moral superiority of a national group and stigmatizing another group (martyrs in opposition to perpetrators). In other words, could 'victims', after their disappearances, become 'martyrs' against their will, or at least without consideration of their will? This is of course crucial when looking at civilian deaths in opposition to military forces losses, the latter being characterized by a form of agency implying a commitment to a cause. It goes without saying though, that the soldier's agency – his or her voluntary involvement – may be strongly nuanced, as many soldiers are enrolled without their consent or have been warring for reasons largely disconnected from the cause they are supposedly fighting for.

In any case, Oradour commemorations attest to such a shift, insofar as its inhabitants, mostly women and children, certainly did not choose to be victims or raised as martyrs of the French nation. Their status as victims has thus been hijacked and transformed into one of martyrs in order to consolidate the national identity of a country in reconstruction. This is partly confirmed by Bennett-Farmer (2000, p. 10), who demonstrates how this notion of martyrdom has been integrated into the French memorialscape after the war through commemorative ceremonies and memorials:

The story of innocent villages massacred by the Nazis implicitly gave the message that, regardless of their political choices or wartime loyalties, every French person was at risk and

potentially a martyr. The Resistance has received the most attention in official remembrances of the Second World War, but Oradour provides an alternative, symbolizing the victimization of unengaged French people rather than those who opposed the oppressor.

Turning victims into martyrs can thus be considered as a way of nationalizing – and dehumanizing – the dead by transforming individuals into patriotic symbols.

Finally, this memorial dynamic can also be related to the religious dimension of martyrdom, particularly with regard to the Catholic doctrine. Baillie (2013, p. 125) looks at the dissemination of Catholic symbols in Vukovar after Croatian forces recovered their lost territories in 1995, pointing to the sacred dimension it added to the city:

In Vukovar, the 'sacred nature' of these sites is reinforced through the use of religious symbols (e.g. crosses) and the contribution made by the priest (e.g. special masses, processions, other rites). Collectively, Vukovar's Croat dead are depicted as innocent victims/heroes.

For her, by making their subjects sacrosanct, these memorials buffer them from critics, rendering Croats beyond reproach.

Before going into further development, it is important to bear in mind that the constitution of the 'martyred city' depicted here is a process, to which cities can relate at various levels. The 'martyred city' is an abstraction – a conceptual frame – insofar as a martyred city does not exist *per se*. It is, of course, impossible to imagine a city where the totality of the memorialscape is determined by just one historical event, even the most traumatic. Therefore, the objective here is less to define whether or not a place is a 'martyred city', but more to show the degree to which it integrates this conceptual frame. Certain places like Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Oradour can already be introduced as paradigmatic illustrations of this process.

### ***Touring the 'martyred city'***

Oradour can also illustrate the touristification of a place associated with the notion of martyrdom. If at first it incorporated commemorative and testimonial dimensions of martyrdom, in that the ruins of the village were voluntarily conserved, tourists started to flow once the war was over. According to a collaborator of the visiting centre, the number of visitors has remained stable for the past 50 years, ranging between 90,000 and 110,000 every year (personal communication, 05.10.2011). However, aside from the fact that the ruined village was no longer inhabited once it was turned into a site of memory, its touristic dimension also developed after its official designation as a 'martyred village'. Yet in the context of the former Yugoslavia, it is particularly the touristification of places, but above all, of their war cultural heritage, that contributed to their constitution as 'martyred cities'.

Looking at the place of fear in urban centres like Berlin, Neil (2001, p. 826) asks how a city 'twined with hell', labelled as the 'capital of remorse', can be touristically promoted:

In short Berlin's place marketing is plagued by a tension between distancing the city from the fears conjured up by the city's Nazi past but still finding an acceptable way to confront and keep alive the memory of this awful reality.

The case of Berlin demonstrates the tensions involved when tourism promotion and traumatic heritage are at stake. Concretely, it is exemplified by Breindersdorfer (2011) and Sion (2008) who highlight some site-use conflicts at the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, where sorrow clashes with touristic or daily practices like sunbathing, picnicking or biking, more associated with leisure than memory.

The purpose here is not to engage in a moral debate on the practices and uses suitable for such places. The examples of Oradour and the Berlin Memorial aim to point to the issues involved in the memorialization of extreme traumas, transforming places into icons of evil or suffering, and the more trivial practices attached to them, like tourism, or simply daily life routine. When a 'martyred city' is also a living environment, the site-use conflicts may become much more problematic. Bennett-Farmer (2000) also demonstrates that tensions can even increase when commemorative practices are initiated by external agents; in the case of Oradour, the French State's actions led to numerous oppositions from the local population.

An intense promotion of war heritage can be observed in different regions, such as in parts of France, Vietnam, Cambodia or Poland, where some places can be integrated in the 'martyred city' framework. Margolin (2007) notes about the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, that in a city 'which counts only a few landmarks, "genocide tourism" became a must'. Building on this idea, do traumascapes that are initially weakly promoted on the tourism scene tend to rely upon this war heritage, and thereby contribute to the 'martyred city'? That is what is implied in Topol's (2012, p. 124) cynical and burlesque novel – *The Devil's Workshop* – when the integration of Belarusian traumatic history in the tourism sector is advocated by one of the characters in order to transform the country into the 'Jurassic Park of horror and the eco-museum of totalitarianism':

You know how many tourists Belarus gets every year?  
3'500 whispers Marouchka since I have no idea at all.  
'It is time for change' says Arthur. 'You know which country had the most people killed? Here! You know in which country communists killed the most people? Here! Do you know where people keep on disappearing? Here! So isn't it a unique country? Exactly! A globalised world means role repartition for God's sake! Thailand for sex, Italy for the See and the paintings, Netherlands for the cheese and the clogs, and Belarus for horror trips.'<sup>7</sup>

Sarajevo and Vukovar memorialscapes and emerging touristscapes are largely based on their traumatic history, allowing them to incorporate the 'martyred city' framework. As it is postulated, sites and objects of memory attached to armed conflict, highly promoted within the tourism sector, contribute to the constitution of 'martyred cities' in the former Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, in places where different national groups that opposed each other during the war then share a territory afterwards, the 'martyred city' can contribute to the perpetuation of conflict by crystallizing national identities on, thereby harming any reconciliation dynamic. Conversely, the context of such post-war divisions also contributes to the 'martyred city' condition through the construction and reinforcement of war categories, often limited to the ones of martyrs, victims and perpetrators; this dynamic can lead to conflictual representations between a group belonging to the 'martyred city' and other groups considered as perpetrators or enemies.

As Viejo-Rose (2011, p. 47) underlines, memory conflicts attached to war categories can perpetuate violence cycles a long time after the official end of a war: 'Memory battles and competitions for victimhood are destructive; reconciliatory memorials would have to, in both intent and impact, release societies from cycles of violence fuelled by the legacies of the past conflicts.'

## Martyred cities in former Yugoslavia

Sarajevo and Vukovar both lived through terrible sieges during the wars of the 1990s. The capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina was besieged from 1992 to 1996, and it is estimated that approximately 10,000 people were killed during this time. Vukovar was under siege for three months, from August to November 1991, and was defended by a few thousand *braniteljis*.<sup>8</sup> In both cases, the besiegers were composed predominantly of Serbian paramilitaries and militias, and supported by the Yugoslavian national army,<sup>9</sup> which also progressively became dominated by Serbs.<sup>10</sup>

Two decades after the end of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, the two cities are now living in a context of division. This is institutionalized by a demarcation line in Sarajevo,<sup>11</sup> while in Vukovar, it is lived through a high level of political and social tensions between Croatian citizens and the large Serbian minority who stayed in the city once it was reintegrated into Croatian territories in 1998. However, since 2000, the two places are also experiencing the return of tourists to varying degrees. Vukovar was primarily visited by Croatian tourists, many of them coming to pay tribute to this important symbol of Croatian independence, progressively followed by more international visitors. Sarajevo, already a relatively important touristic city destination before the war, saw the reappearance of a significant number of international and local tourists in 2005.

### Places as war symbols

During and after the armed conflicts, Sarajevo and Vukovar became important symbols. First, at a national level, they represented the struggle for independence of Bosnia and Croatia. Second, on a global level, they also rapidly became iconic images of suffering and resistance, in a similar vein to how Auschwitz is now a paradigmatic illustration of collective trauma.

Vukovar and its links to independence and war are symbolized in popular music (Baker, 2009), history textbooks (Höpken, 2007; Najbar-Agičić and Agičić, 2007), commemorative ceremonies (Kardov, 2007), religious heritage (Baillie, 2011), stamps, street names and banknotes (Naef, 2013), and of course in the military sphere (Naef, 2014). Furthermore, large signs representing former *braniteljis* are disseminated around the region of Slavonia, where the town is situated, and many inscriptions and graffiti remind the passers-by of the iconic status of the place (Naef, 2012).

In 2011, the president of the parliament even suggested the creation of a central site dedicated to the siege, that would be 'mandatory' for all schoolchildren across the country to visit: 'A place where they could learn about the war in Vukovar and the role [of] Vukovar itself, which was crucial for the establishment of the Republic of Croatia' (personal communication, 18.08.2011). Kardov also notes that between 1993 and 1994, some Croatian citizens suggested keeping Vukovar destroyed and fenced in as a monument, similar to what has been done for Oradour. He adds that from this moment 'it was perfectly clear that Vukovar occupied a significant place in national memory' (Kardov, 2007, p. 66).

In neighbouring Bosnia, Sarajevo received a wide echo in the international media during the siege, along with a relatively important resonance in popular culture (Naef, 2013). However, Causević (2008, p. 282) supports the idea that Sarajevo lost its place in the media once the war was over, 'except when there was a story directly related to the

conflict'. This is partly confirmed in the field by one of the founders of *Green Visions*, a tour operator in Sarajevo, who underlines that Sarajevo is always put in relation to war, in Bosnia or elsewhere:

Bosnia keeps popping up in the media. For instance, the *Daily Telegraph* titled an article on 'wild frontiers': 'British are going to war zone', quoting countries like Sudan and Bosnia in the first line. But when you read the article there was nothing on Bosnia. And the *Guardian* made a parallel about what is going on now in Libya<sup>12</sup> [...] and the Sarajevo siege. That had nothing to do, but it is so easy for people to use Bosnia as a headline. (personal communication, 24.08.2011)

Moreover, the Sarajevo Symbol recently came back on the front stage, when in 2014 the centennial of the First World War outset was commemorated in Bosnia. In this context, conflictual and opposed commemorative ceremonies organized in both entities – the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina run by Bosniaks and Croats and the *Republika Srpska* run by Serbs – demonstrated that the reconciliation process in the country was far from being achieved.

### **Setting the martyrscape**

In Croatia, the city of Vukovar and the region of Slavonia are considered to have the largest number of monuments related to the last war (Baillie, 2013). The *Ovčara* Memorial Centre, the Museum *Vukovar Hospital 1991*, the Cemetery for Croat defenders and the water tower<sup>13</sup> constitute without doubt the most prominent and promoted sites. Furthermore, Vukovar, a city with less than 30,000 inhabitants, counts six cemeteries, all differentiated by religious or national affiliations.

Baillie (2011) conducted an in-depth analysis of cultural heritage management during and after the war in Croatia, highlighting the present profusion of Croatian memorials. She describes the different periods<sup>14</sup> the city of Vukovar went through as symbolical colonization and decolonization; a semiological guerrilla 'presenting binary of Croats as heroes and Serbs as the collectively guilty party' (2011, p. 40). A study on tourism development in Vukovar (Naef, 2014) also demonstrates that Croatian war heritage is highly promoted in the local tourism sector. In 2011, the logo of a Croatian veteran's association was represented across the cover of the city's tourist maps, and more than half of the landmarks highlighted therein were related to the last war, including memorials, museums and war-destroyed sites. Moreover, the *Ovčara* Memorial Centre and the Museum *Vukovar Hospital 1991* were, at the time, the most visited sites by far.

This has to do with the history of the place, but also with its symbolic dimension. In the 2000s, Croats from all over the country would come to visit these monuments and the place itself, which holds great importance in the national narrative (Baillie, 2011). If the tourism demography is now shifting towards an increase in international visitors and a decrease in nationals (Naef, 2014), the war still dominates tourism representations and underlying narratives; this dynamic can nevertheless be called into question. For the local president of the SDSS,<sup>15</sup> tourism cannot be limited to war heritage:

I have the impression that only a few cruise ships embark and spend just a little time here. It is a matter of marketing. It is in our hands to do more, to keep the people here and make them spend time here. Marketing is not only the war and the things related with the war. There must

be some other things that people like to see. And we know that there are things to be shown. (personal communication, 24.08.2011)

Moreover, the director of the Croatian Conservation Centre points out in 2011 that the mayor of Vukovar at the time clearly expressed his wish to reconstruct the city as soon as possible in order to present another image than that of a ruin:

There are a lot of tourists coming from cruise ships on the Danube. They get off the boat to visit the damages of Vukovar. The mayor suggested: 'We should renovate the city quickly, so those tourists stop to see a destroyed city.'

In this Eastern town of Croatia, between preservation of the ruins and the whole reconstruction of the city, different memorial conceptions are at stake, which is often a source of conflict.

The tourism sector also actively contributes to diffusing the image of a martyred city, often associating the place with sacrifice. In 2011, a website managed by the Croatian tourism board explicitly put Vukovar in perspective with notions like bravery, heroism and the sacred:

Vukovar is today regarded as the symbol of Croatian resistance, an invincible heroic town, and also a symbol of peace, reflecting the bravery of its defenders. It was the selfless sacrifice of Vukovar's defenders that gained it its sacred status in the fight for Croatian independence.<sup>16</sup>

On a more local scale, Vukovar's tourism office offers its visitors a promotion brochure describing the city with different themes like history, architecture and nature. One full page is dedicated to the sites of memory attached to the last war, where pictures illustrate a poem to the town's glory and pride: 'Vukovar is a miraculous town ... Vukovar is pride ... Vukovar is defiance ... It is a tear in one's eye, sorrow at one's heart ... And smile on one's lips ... Vukovar is both past and future.' The last page of the booklet represents a Croatian flag floating at the rear of a boat. Finally, a water tower in ruins ([Figure 1](#)) is also highly utilized in tourism promotion and the local tourism office's website presents it as a symbol of victory, as well as one of pain and suffering: 'The water tower will not be renewed in its original function, but it will become the memorial area which will be a reminder of pain and suffering that Vukovar endured'.<sup>17</sup>

In Sarajevo, several museums and memorials are related to the last war and an increasing number of tourist guides are proposing 'war tours' in the city and its surroundings (Naef, 2014). However, Sarajevo's memorialscape can hardly be compared to that of Vukovar. First of all, the Bosnian capital represents one of the main urban centres in the region; it is thus considerably more populated and cultural tourism resources are more diverse. Moreover, Sarajevo has long been considered a cultural epicentre in the former Yugoslavia, and if several state institutions recently shut down or are very close to bankruptcy, an intense cultural dynamism still remains, illustrated by numerous festivals and diverse unofficial initiatives. Furthermore, various tour operators propose thematic tours of the city focusing on religion, gastronomy or general history. Yet the fact remains that, 20 years after the siege, 'war tours' are the most demanded and promoted, according to most guides and tour operators. (Naef, 2014)

The museum scene is also varied, and if several institutions focus on war heritage from the most recent conflict, their interpretations are far from homogenous. Considering those sites of memory associated with the martyred city conception, the *Alija Izetbegović*



**Figure 1.** The water tower in Vukovar.

*Museum* is certainly worthy of interest. This museum dedicated to the first president of Bosnia was founded in 2007 and became independent in 2012. Its management is closely connected to the nearby *Kovači Martyrs cemetery* where Izetbegović is buried. An important memorial project was implemented in the area, involving a wall of names and an exhibition on the Bosnian war, following the recent construction of an auditorium.

This museum is generally presented as an illustration of Izetbegović's inclusive and open conception of politics and, more generally speaking, of the broad multicultural image promoted by the Sarajevo tourism sector (Makas, 2012). However, a close examination of the museum narratives shows a clear designation of the victims and the perpetrators. The enemy is the Serb, often portrayed as a 'chetnik',<sup>18</sup> 'a genocide threat' and even as an 'aggressor motivated by Nazi-style propaganda'. On the other hand, quotes of famous figures regarding Izetbegović are also reproduced; one mentions that his 'supporters would become his fanatic followers'. Furthermore, the museum narratives suggest without ambiguity that Bosnia won the moral war: 'We are the moral winner! There are no military victors. We have both won and lost.'<sup>19</sup>

### **Resisting the martyredscape**

Mladen Miljanović, a local sculptor representing Bosnia at the 2013 Venice Biennale, speaks about 'socio-pathetic art' when referring to the constant exploitation of war heritage in Bosnian art practices over the past fifteen years. In opposition, he proposes his *Garden of Delights* in order to paint Bosnia as 'something good, something that one wants to discover, to taste'.<sup>20</sup> This is a mechanism of resistance to the usual dominant symbols of martyrdom or victimhood prevalent in Bosnia.

Similar mechanisms can be identified in Sarajevo memorialscape. In the Museum of History, a permanent exhibition on the siege – *Surrounded Sarajevo* – focuses on the inhabitants, highlighting their ingenuity and creativity. Presenting some of their everyday objects as 'survival tools', the inhabitants, irrespective of their nationalities, are the main actors of this 'living museum': 'Although arranged by the museum's curators, it is the work of all Sarajevans [ ... ] With this exhibition, we have tried to avoid giving final judgments, ideological opinions and qualifications. We are leaving them to history, science and time.'<sup>21</sup>

In opposition to martyrdom, such exhibitions emphasize a form of resistance developed by inhabitants, detached from the military context and oriented towards a civilian dimension. This form of resistance can be related to what is sometimes referred to as the 'spirit of Sarajevo' (Volčič, Erjavec, & Peak, 2013, p. 7), or the capacity of its inhabitants to live together despite national, cultural or religious differences. Through the mobilization of 'survival tools' and diverse artistic productions like *Miss Sarajevo*, the organization of the Sarajevo Film Festival or the many plays presented during the siege, it is the whole civilian resistance based on the Sarajevan spirit that is put forward. The Sarajevo Film Festival's first posters exhibited here testify to this particular notion of resistance. The famous 1993 festival poster illustrates the cello player Vedran Smailović, well known for his concerts in destroyed buildings, like the one in the Vijećnica library, thus underlining artists' resistance through cinema and music (Figure 2). In 1994, the festival was organized with the slogan: 'to be or not to be', where the 'not to be' is crossed out and followed by the sentence: 'No question!' (Figure 3) This decontextualized quote from Shakespeare is also now the name of a touristic restaurant in the Old Town.

These examples can be seen as symbols of the Sarajevans' will to escape the war context by pursuing everyday practices and the cultural animation of the city during the siege. If the famous tunnel of Sarajevo allowed citizens to respond to vital needs like food or medicine, such initiatives also symbolize the access to another vital need in besieged Sarajevo: culture. In this context, the *Sarajevo Survival Guide*, a tourist city guidebook parody, describes the Bosnian capital not as a 'victim', but as 'place of experiment' (Fama, 1993).

Volčič et al.'s (2013, p. 7) findings based on interviews with tourism journalists reveal a will to promote this spirit of Sarajevo in order to present the Bosnian capital as an attractive destination:

These informants in particular recognize Sarajevo as a city that has a specific appeal for tourists, and they frame post-war Sarajevo in a way that makes it a desirable travel destination worthy of tourism, economic attention, and investment. Some emphasize the need to 'market' and 'advertise' this 'spirit of Sarajevo,' an aspiration typical of neoliberal discourse and vocabulary.



**Figure 2.** Sarajevo film festival poster in 1993.

However, they also highlight tourists' fascination with violence and conflict, illustrating it by the used bullets and mortar available in tourist shops, even mentioning the possibility for visitors to buy victims' shoes. One can see here a paradox in the touristification of war, with the promotion of Sarajevo spirit on the one hand, and a fascination with violence on the other. The latest contributes to producing 'balkanik' representations, described by Torodova (2009) as Western and romanticized conceptions of the region based on violence, primitivism and savagery.

### **Discussion: living in the 'martyred city'**

These case studies illustrate how dynamics specific to tourism can coexist with others, like nation-building and war commemoration. Here, tourism development contributes to transforming places into war symbols and to supporting their 'martyred city' condition.

This process is more obvious in Vukovar, where notions of martyrdom and sacrifice are omnipresent in the tourism narrative and most of the memorialscape is oriented towards the last war. Moreover, tourism is nowadays deeply intertwined with this war heritage, thus contributing to its 'martyred city' condition. This status is strongly reinforced by the fact that Vukovar is considered as an essential element in discourses on the new Croatian national construction; a localized act of destruction evolving into a national symbol.



**Figure 3.** Sarajevo film festival poster in 1994.

Croatian war veteran groups are thus largely involved in tourism structures, strongly influencing the narrative and the general interpretation of this heritage. As a result, one can observe the production of unilateral narratives on war that are dominated by the Croatian community.

Sarajevo certainly presents a more complex case in the 'martyred city' framework. If war memorials are prevalent in the Bosnian capital, they are far from composing the entire city's memorialscape. Furthermore, war museums and 'war tours' are also widespread, but neither do they represent the entire touristic offering of Sarajevo. As previously mentioned, this is linked to the size of the city and its rank as a capital. Sarajevo experiences a more significant cultural and touristic dynamic than does Vukovar, allowing the development of practices and institutions detached from war memory, conceptualized here as resistance mechanisms. However, this does not prevent the Bosnian capital from being characterized by its war image 20 years after the end of the conflict.

If vectors such as cinema or the media are essential to the construction of these representations, the present analysis has shown how tourism can also contribute to the formation of these war images. While alternative tourism sites are proposed, it is still the war that constitutes the major attraction in Sarajevo, partly confirming the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)'s idea that the Balkans represent a place where the "dark side" often overshadows opportunities based on rich, diverse, natural and human assets, the "bright side".<sup>22</sup>

A place like Sarajevo, well known for its cultural dynamism before the war, experiences nowadays the progressive rebirth of heritage elements that are detached from its traumascape or warscape, such as museums, cultural centres, mosques and churches. These elements thus offer cultural and touristic alternatives to the numerous war museums and other sites of memory directly attached to Sarajevo's traumascape. In 2013, the tourism section of the *New York Times* mentioned how the 'creative spirit' of Sarajevo's inhabitants is leading the cultural rebirth of the city:

The creative spirit that Sarajevans fought to preserve is very much in evidence these days. Neighborhoods, cradled in this valley and ringing the foothills, are fertile entrepreneurial grounds and a testament to the epochs that came before. Cafes, theaters, boutiques and restaurants have sprouted among buildings in myriad styles, including Ottoman, Secessionist, Communist and modern. And locals and visitors alike are rediscovering the surrounding mountains on the slopes that hosted the 1984 Winter Olympic Games.<sup>23</sup>

If this statement should be somehow nuanced given the numerous political and administrative problems occurring in State-driven cultural institutions, Sarajevo remains an important regional centre for culture. In Vukovar, on the other hand, one can also observe the development of alternative cultural projects, but attendance and promotion are very limited compared to war sites, like the *Ovčara* Memorial Centre or the *Vukovar Hospital 1991* museum.

Finally, a close look at issues involved in the interpretation and presentation of war heritage is essential in the 'martyred city' framework. In Sarajevo, narratives and representations can be diverse, as has been partly illustrated with the various perspectives – nationalist and civilian – presented by the *Izetbegović* Museum and the *Surrounded Sarajevo* exhibition. In opposition, Vukovar's sites of memory closely follow the same line of interpretation, emphasizing the resistance and suffering of all the Croats in opposition to the entirety of the local Serbian community, which is considered as the aggressors.

Yet in both cases, one can see a shift from victimhood to martyrdom. This is obvious in Vukovar, where most of the war heritage sites tend to present the entire Croatian community (civilians and defenders) as martyrs, regardless of their actions and affiliations during the war, while Serbs – including those who stayed in the town during the siege to defend it – are considered the enemy. In the *Izetbegović* Museum, this process can also be partly observed, but an exhibition like *Surrounded Sarajevo* shows how Sarajevans were able to maintain the cultural life of the city and thus resist in some way their martyr condition.

The 'martyred city' is tributary of the different agendas that determine the political, economic, social and cultural organization of the place. This contribution has demonstrated how tourism and museum sectors can rely on it to develop a specific proposition. Moreover, the touristification and musealization of war heritage can be a powerful tool to attract private and public funding. Finally, from a political perspective, the 'martyred city' is fertile ground for spreading nationalist narratives.

Yet this process is not limited to tourism. Beyond war tours and museums, the 'martyred city' also favours veterans' associations in terms of pensions; artists can be tempted to use this martyrdom image in order to get funding or exposure; many post-Yugoslavian cinematic productions focus on the last wars. These different agendas thus influence the memorial and touristic politics of a place, contributing to the creation of an urban landscape dominated by sadness and pain. Moreover, when the 'martyred city' is characterized by

a divided context within different communities previously at war, this process can lead to the reinforcement of war categories.

Inhabitants seem somehow trapped in these 'martyred cities'; a group considered as the perpetrators can fall victim to a memorial embargo, its voice totally silenced. The 'martyred group' can also be held hostage by association with a cause that may not necessarily be its own. Indeed, dying in Vukovar or Sarajevo does not necessarily imply a will to sacrifice oneself for Croatia or Bosnia. This can be even more problematic when victims become part of memorial conflicts and are instrumentalized by political parties, non-governmental organizations or veterans' associations in order to show who suffered the most (e.g. issues involving the counting of victims after a massacre). Furthermore, beyond representations and symbols, the 'martyred city' can have very concrete repercussions, such as constraints and refusals when development projects detached from the war are proposed.

Living, dwelling and interacting in a 'martyred city' can thus be an important issue. The concept of 'museum city' has been introduced to describe urban centres frozen by their heritagisation and touristsification; 'martyred city', in turn, can be described as 'cemetery-cities', reified and frozen in pain, sadness and victimhood.

## Conclusion

This last statement may seem extreme. However, the 'martyred city' has to be understood more as a conceptual framework than a material reality; the cities of Vukovar and Sarajevo do not fit that model in the same ways. Moreover, this analysis does not question the idea that memorial practices in general are part of a fundamental process of grieving and giving meaning to a traumatic past. Rather, this concept allows us to highlight some issues and conflicts arising when there is an intense promotion of war heritage, thus contributing to the construction of a landscape that is frozen and tied to the notion of martyrdom. This static conception of memory is highlighted by Nora (1997), who considers his 'lieux de mémoire' as a fixing of time and an immortalization of death.

The main point of this article is to underscore the ways in which the construction and development of numerous sites, objects and practices of memory can contribute to crystallizing and freezing a place around a particular historical event. Some cities are marked by a traumatic past and its intense heritagisation can strongly determine the place's identity, thus contributing to potential memorial tensions. This may lead to the symbolic reproduction of the conflict through tourism, museums and memorials. However, different elements can be considered as resistance mechanisms to this process, and time – in other words, the chronological distance between the current moment and the past event in question – seems to be one of the strongest. Bennett-Farmer (2000, p. 10) suggests this in relation to Oradour, demonstrating the impossibility of fixing time and memory: 'Over time, rain has washed the blackened remains of Oradour.'

## Notes

1. Agenzia Fides (2012, June 4). 'The desolation of Homs and the war of information': The words of a Greek-catholic Bishop. *Vatican News*; Milan Rai (2013, April) Fallujah, city of martyrs. *PeaceNews*.

- Info*; Fausto Giudice (2015, April 26) 26 April 1937: The tragedy of Guernica. Tlaxcala; Ilena Cueto Asín (2012, September 17) Guernica and *Guernica* in British and American Poetry. The Volunteer.
2. The village of Oradour-sur-Glane in France was destroyed in 10 June 1944. The Waffen-SS massacred more than 600 of its inhabitants, including women and children.
  3. Luis Antonio Bolín was the director of the National Service of Tourism.
  4. Translated from French by the author.
  5. Republic of Serbian Krajina.
  6. *devoir de mémoire* in French.
  7. Translated from the French version by the author.
  8. 'Defender' in Croatian. They were mainly composed of soldiers and inhabitants who decided to stay in the town to fight the assailants. They have acquired a valorized status after the war and some of them are now even considered heroes by Croats.
  9. *Jugoslovenska narodna armija (JNA)*.
  10. In Sarajevo, it was transformed into the 'Bosnian Serb Army' soon after the beginning of hostilities.
  11. Bosnia-Herzegovina is divided in two entities. The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina administered by Bosniaks and Croats (51% of the territory) and the *Republika Srpska* administered by Serbs (49% of the territory). The demarcation line also passes through Sarajevo, placing the Eastern part of the Bosnian capital in the *Republika Srpska*.
  12. The interviewee is referring to hostages held in Libya in 2011.
  13. This ruined water tower is now an important memorial attached to the Croatian War.
  14. The siege (August–November 1991), The 'Serb Krajina Vukovar' (1991–1995) and the 'Croatian Vukovar' after the whole reintegration of the Croatian territory (1998–present).
  15. Serbian Democratic and Independent Party (*Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka*).
  16. Croatia at a glance: <http://onecroatia.info/en/destinacije/vukovar-2/> (December 2013).
  17. Vukovar Tourism Office: <http://www.turizamvukovar.hr/index.php?lang=en> (December 2013).
  18. The Chetnik movement was founded during the Second World War to support the exiled government of Yugoslavia. It was first supported by the Allies who then decided to back up the Partisans of Tito. Some Serbian paramilitaries groups have used this designation during the wars in the nineties.
  19. Excerpt from the Izetbegović Museum (Sarajevo, 2011).
  20. Rossini, A. (2013, May 17). Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Garden of delights at the Venice Biennale. Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso.
  21. Excerpt from the Historical Museum (Sarajevo, 2011).
  22. UNEP (United Nation Environment Program) & GRID (Global Resource Information Data-base) (2007) Balkans. Vital Graphics. Environment without borders. *Zemun*, p. 3.
  23. Crevar, A. (2013, October 9) 36 Hours in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. *The New York Times*.

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