
Historical memory and current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Project report

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15 years by Jim Marshall

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Acknowledgements



Abstract

During six days, different youths from Catalonia are getting involved in the historical memory and current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the guide of youths from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, in order to become aware of the still remaining consequences of the ethnical Croat-Bosniak War (1992-1995).

The project arises from the link between Barcelona and Sarajevo as Olympic cities, 1992 and 1984, respectively.

Regarding the consequences, the input it is made with reference of the recognition of the victims from both sides of the war and the similarities and differences as to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), this is, the Law 57/2007, commonly known as Historical Memory Law.

Methodology and aims

The proposed activities are based on the one side, the exposition and experiences from representatives from ONG in order to enhance the awareness of the experiences during the war and personal and social consequences towards contemporary status, as a non-formal education, as well as to encase the empathic ability regarding multi-ethnicity and interculturality. On the other side, thought visits at museums and historical places, spaces for dialogue are sought, along with the capacity building of youths to play a positive role in helping tackle the challenging regarding historical memories in the current world.

Consequently, the project use non-formals methods to gain its aims of improving competences about the current situation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to take into account the personal development of each participants, considering their different backgrounds. Likewise, it is seek enable youth to contribute turning the challenges into opportunities for all stakeholders regarding preservation of dignity and human rights and fostering reflection on different dimensions plicate to the corresponding Spanish Civil War situation.

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Brief introduction

On September 5, the new formed Bosnia Working Group of the CJB took the plane take us to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, before that day we met in order to prepare the presentation about the situation of historical memory in Spain. We were a newly constructed group, with different profiles and without much experience, but above all, our group was very excited and motivated to be part of the project.

Day 1, September 5

Getting at YIHR BH Office

Once we arrived at the airport in Sarajevo, the local group, who led us to the hostel, welcomed us. Later on, they show us the headquarters of the foundation, where they briefly presented the project and they offered us a little game to break the ice and get to know each other a bit more.

Free time

The participants decided to discover the marks of war through the exploration of the Sarajevo. Consequently, a visit at the city marked was made letting the youth impressed by the cultural contrasts.

From the top of Zuta Tavija hill, we had the opportunity to see the whole valley of Sarajevo and how the city extended. We were also impressed by its huge cemeteries, which were not separated from the city nor hidden behind walls, but fully integrated and open, dying the city of green. With the sunset we concluded that day, seeing, from the hill, how the lights of all the minarets were lit while we listened to the prayers of the Muzensin resounding all over the city.

Day 2, September 6

Visit of Sarajevo's war spots with General Jovan Divjack and discussion about the work of the Foundation Education Builds BiH

Presentations by country representatives on current situations in their countries

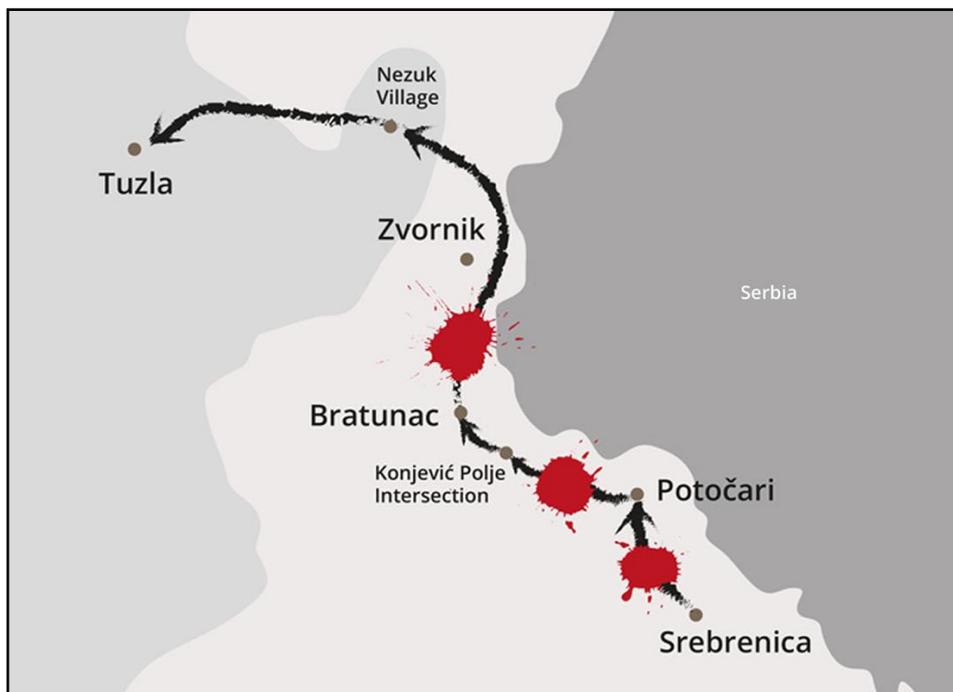
When we were back from lunch -that was also a good time to keep discovering a bit more about each other- we went to the Office. The planning for that afternoon was to hold an exposition about the main points of our society regarding historical remembrance and politics. Then, the Bosnian Association would do the same, and after that, we were going to discuss a bit about those issues. So some of us volunteered to talk, and they gave an excellent speech about the Civil War in Spain, the social consequences, and how it has rebounded in the current political situation. We basically wanted to show to our Bosnian mates that we also have some “non fixed” troubles related to the war. Then, it was the turn of the Bosnian Association. With their explanations accompanied by some videos, they were able to show us their political system -which is actually quite complicated- and after that we had an interesting debate. We asked Bosnians about different topics that are considered controversial. That talk was absolutely enriching, so much that we didn't want to go dinner!

Day 3, September 7

Visit to Memorial Centre Srebrenica

Srebrenica - Potocari and multi-video room

The visit started with the memories of an anonymous survivor of the *Genocid u Srebrenici*, who explained how before the war, coexistence was natural between Bosniaks and Serbs in Srebrenica. Afterwards, he continued to explain his point of view regarding the life conditions during the siege of the town in question, as well as the establishment of a safe zone by the United Nations Security Council. He pointed out the assault on Srebrenica on July 10,, 1995 by the army of the Republika Srpska and the inability of the United Nations peacekeeping mission to resist the attack. It was then when he, along with other citizens, escaped through the west-headed mountains towards Tuzla, which was controlled by the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, the ones who were not able to achieve the destination, were captured and transferred at the detention centers of Srebrenica, which were in charge of the Serb soldiers, and subsequently, executed. Respectively, this journey or intent of escape it is known *The Death March*.



Source: [Remembering Srebrenica](#)

The personal experiences were followed by a thirty-minute documentary of the *Genocid u Srebrenici*, where the facts explained by the survivor¹ were shown through the recorded images.

The recorded conclude with the execution of men who have to be moved of their colleagues in other places. Subsequently, it is proceeded to the execution of this last one as well.



Source: [Srebrenica Massacre](#)²

Dutch exhibition

Once the video has finished, the part of the visit concluded with the viewing of the exhibition of the Dutch regimen, in charge of carrying out the peacekeeping mission agreed by the United Nations Security Council. It included multiples recorded audio and visual, as well as photography, which were accompanied by information, in order to obtain additional knowledge. This lead to perceive the structural problems of the mission, which above all, were because of a lack of consolidated military manpower, due to its youngness and inexperience, ironically, in peacekeeping missions as well as the absence of a mindset training in similar situations. Furthermore, the soldiers deployed in the field did not receive the air force support they requested. This requested was made for their military commandment based in Zagreb, which would have been proven to resist assaults. Despite, the United Nations Security Council resolution did not clearly specified the extent to which the force in question had to enforce the safe zone and neither the concrete means that should be adopted for the defence of a a direct aggression on the

¹ The survivor was recognised on the documentary among the people who are seen arriving to Tuzla after marching through the mountains.

² Even if the source it is respected, the authors want to point out that, since there is a distinction between massacre and genocide they consider the second concept being the appropriate one, due to the war was for ethnical reasons.

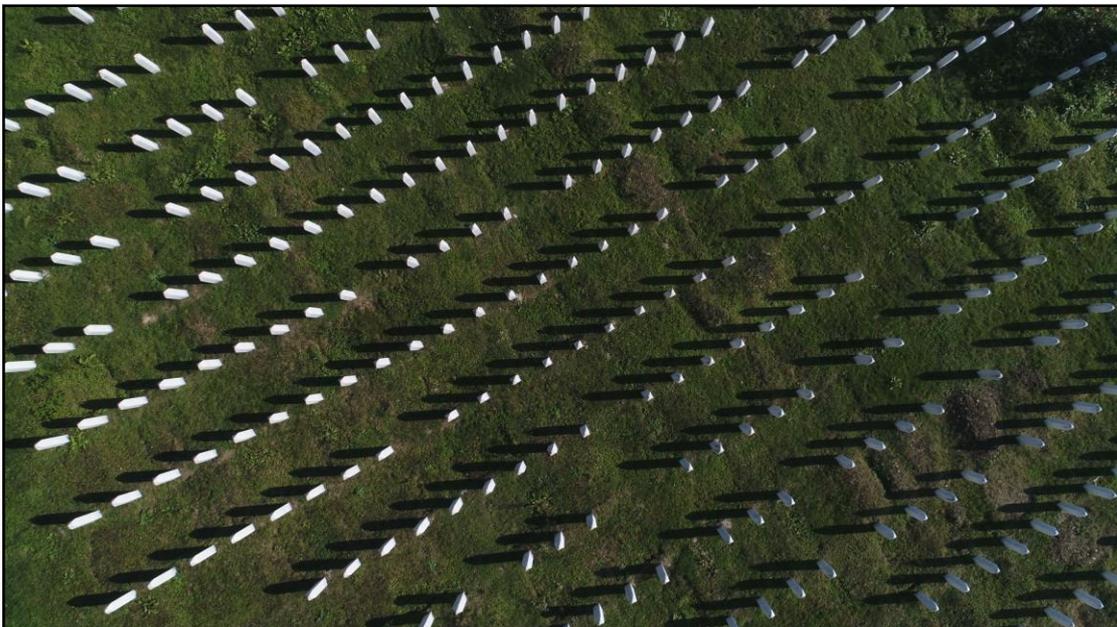
population, thus creating legal insecurity that made the decision-making process complicated. Consequently, these factors led the Dutch army to surrender to the Bosnian-



Serb forces.

Source: [Arab News](#)

Lastly, after visiting the museum, a visit at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and



Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide was it was carried out.

Source: [Pond5](#)

Meeting with Mothers of Srebrenica

The second part of the trip was dedicated towards the association Mothers of Srebrenica, also known as the Mothers of the Enclaves of Srebrenica and Žepa who after explained their feelings, they manifest their fight against the Article 105 of the United Nations Charter regarding its immunity, with the aim to prevent from happening again similar events. They also explained us the importance of violating women and committing genocide towards men and children, being violating as an aim to prevent the reappearance of the Muslim ethnicity

Return in Sarajevo: reflection time

The return to Sarajevo led a debate of what was seen during the day. That implied sharing the emotional impact of the participants. As a result, the conclusion was the need of the memorialisation places as a boost remembrance of the past that should not be repeated in the future, as well as a tool against the hate speech, being this the main cause of the events happened in Srebrenica.

The reflection conclude with the idea that dehumanising a human being or a community not only can lead though massive assassination or massacres, but also to the genocide between citizens who used to coexist together.

Day 4, September 7

Meeting with PhD Nicolas Moll, historian, Memory walk through 100 years of Sarajevo history

After our first daytrip we stayed in Sarajevo another day. It was the museum's day.

In the morning, we met with PhD Nicolas Moll, historian, at the Sarajevo's Historical Museum. He explained us the Sarajevo and Bosnia & Herzegovina history of last 100 years. His explanations were a traditional power point presentation, a tour around the museum and the museum itself. We could visit the two permanent thematic exhibition displayed: "Bosnia and Herzegovina through the centuries" and "Surrounded Sarajevo" as well as the temporary one. The whole explanation was really clear and helpful to put together all

the pieces we had been learning for the past days. Some distinguished sentences from Nicolas Moll that helped us are:

It is easier to rebuild a building than the human being
Dayton was good to finish the war, but not to bring peace

Visit to Sarajevo War Childhood Mueum

In the afternoon, we visited the Sarajevo War Childhood Museum. This is a new museum from last January 2017 opened by Jasmikno Halilovic, one of the 30 young leaders under 30 years in Europe. In this museum are exposed some objects that belong to children during the war. Some of the survivors have donated their beloved objects and memories to the museum to show how they spend their free time and tried to keep a normal life despite the war. This visit was really touchy and personal. Every of us did the museum's tour on their own and in silence.

Free time

After these two museum's visit, we had some free time to clear our minds and after a while, we met to do our daily reflection. Not everyone had to talk and expressed their feelings and thoughts, just the ones who wanted.



Picture 1 “The international community brought us food and at least we could die with the full stomach” (museum’s director). Canned beef outside the Sarajevo’s Historical Museum.



Picture 2: guitar from a survivor child at the War Childhood Museum.

Day 5, September 9

Mostar Tour and Shelters

Start Most

The Most Tour was initially focused in the Start Most, literally meaning being Old Bridge, build during the 16th century and stood until the Croat military forces destroyed during the Croat-Bosniak War. Its reconstruction ended fourteen years ago. The guide explained us the history of the bridge including multiples anecdotes as the pressure that the architecture -Mimar Sinan- had on, since if he was not able to build it, he would be killed. The importance of this type of the construction was not only regarding the

commercial treats but also for the communication between citizens, emphasising the



importance of the destruction during the war.

Source: [Heritage Sense Agency](#)

Source: [World Heritage UNESCO](#)



The Death of Yugoslavia

The tour ended with the visit at the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar, which, from the point of view of the guide, represents the Dead of Yugoslavia. That it is due to even if it was built in honour of the Yugoslav Partisans of Mostar who were assassinated during the World War II in Yugoslavia, after the Croat-Bosniak War, the cemetery-felt victim to neglect and vandalism.



Source: [Failed Architecture](#)



Source: [Traces of War](#)

Return to Sarajevo: reflection time

Due to unexpected logistical events, as a car accident on the road during the return trip of the participants to Sarajevo, the reflection time was not done.

Day 6, September 10

Final reflection

The last day we had the final reflection. In groups of four, we shared all the learnings and experiences we had, also we explained what could be improved. Despite all the opinions, we agreed that it had been a significant experience, where we learnt from the past and the present of Bosnia and Herzegovina and from the group.

Results and discussion

At the end of the trip, it has been a lot what we have learnt. We have been a very complete group, ready to work and learn. Our relationship has also been really good, always keeping the respect amongst us and our opinions, and keen to share our time together, always in contact with the local youngster. The other highlight of the exchange has been the quality, or privilege of the meetings, from Nicholas Moll to the Mothers of Srebrenica, who greatly helped us to understand Bosnia and Herzegovina. We only regret the lack of local youngsters between 25 and 30, so they would have been able to give us the point of view of those who have lived the war.

As for that learnings and reflections, we would remark the importance to always reject the hate speech, as we know where our words start, but not where they will finish. It's also interesting to remember the sentence with which Nadira, a Bosnian participant, summarize our discussion about how to work with historical memory in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Spain, with the words "Learn and move on". Having learnt a lot more than we previously knew at the time, so, to work to pass that knowledges and experiences, in order to be fully prepared to move on and build a better society.

Conclusions by Bosnian participants

1. Lejla Burgić

Six days in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a group of foreigners helped me see my country from a completely different perspective. Sometimes we need someone else's first impression to show us details we miss. Of course, it would not be possible if the group wasn't interested or motivated. Fortunately, we did not have a problem with that. I can say, for most of the time, they were the ones who continued the conversation and discussion, and were always happy to ask more questions for further explanation.

The program itself was well balanced. I am surprised and satisfied we managed to visit different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina in such a short period. For that, I congratulate the organizers.



I had a chance to speak with each person and they all left some impact on me. I truly enjoyed listening to their first impressions, conclusions and doubts they sometimes had. Moreover, I admire their patience to listen about such complicated history and political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Being a local who has heard the same

story for hundreds of times, I can say that speakers on this program were one of the best I have ever listened. Speaking of that, I have to congratulate both groups, from Spain and Bosnia, on presentations they gave about their countries. They were clear, long enough and they covered positive sides and problems both countries are facing now. I am

extremely happy for being the part of this exchange, which has passed better than expected.

Apart from all the official activities, I am sure friendships and relationships born in these six days will stay with us, not only as a treasure memory, but as something we will continue in the future. I am looking forward to meeting you all again.

2. Miloš Kuzmanović

It has been a few days from my trip to Sarajevo. Even now, I am struggling to collect all my thoughts about everything I saw, learned and lived in those few short days. Yes short, because time was not always on our side and the topics we opened required a lot more discussion and talking. Yes short, because both Spanish people and the locals were great, time spent together was amazing, and we needed a lot more time to get to know every one of those people because all of them had so much to offer. I enjoyed every single minute of those five days.

For me, every day brought a rollercoaster of emotions, from happy to sad to shameful to brave to pride. Why you may ask. Well, let's just say you learn from first-hand about some things even in History textbooks none of us really had opportunity to learn because when we learned about Bosnian and Herzegovinian Civil war, or however you may call it, the textbooks just said "Ask your family members, neighbors and friends". So you may imagine the shock some of us experienced listening from first-hand about Siege of Sarajevo (I already knew some things, but I paid attention to Spanish people and their face expressions) about Srebrenica, about Mostar and so on.... Historians did not tell the stories but from the people who actually lived through those events, they survived to tell the story, and that makes it even more special for me.

This project helped us all to remember who we all are. Humans. Humans who can do terrible things to each other just because that's in our nature regardless nationality, sex, religion or skin color. We all can be horrible people. But it helped us get to the conclusion we can be better by accepting our past, respect all the victims but for most important

thing to move on and live our life being better people. People need to learn from the past and act on our mistakes and maybe, just maybe Bosnia and Herzegovina would have brighter future.



In my opinion, the project and the activities had a lot to offer to all the participants both Spanish and Bosnian and Herzegovinian. I really liked the presentation day when we learned a lot about Spanish and Catalanian issues and the parallel we had with current situation in BiH. The discussion after it really amazed me because everyone had so many questions and wanted to know

more. I personally felt pride that someone wanted to know more about my country and the problems and taboos we have here in BiH.

For me the project was a great success and an opportunity to learn more about my country, meet, and exchange experiences with wonderful young people. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this project and would like to meet you all again. I hope that we (the BiH people) influenced and left our personal mark on everyone from the Spanish people and that you carried something positive from meeting us because I definitely did from you, guys.

Be kind, be smart, be respectful, have faith and believe in each other because that is the way to survive and have better life.

3.Nadira Ćurulija

In my opinion, the activities that have taken place during the visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina were excellent. Why? In a short period of time, in just five days, the group was able to see Bosnia and Herzegovina, the current situation in it and the consequences it has regarding the history of the '90-s. Our main stay was the beautiful city of Sarajevo, a city that happily greets anyone, therefore I am glad that the participants from Spain

were able to see and explore the European Jerusalem. We visited Srebrenica and Mostar, cities that directly tell the story of the conflicts in the previous war. Places that show the famous message "learn from this so it wouldn't repeat itself". I know that the situation on the ex-Yugoslav territory is entwined and complex, but I believe that the group managed to get a simplified view and to understand. We also had great speakers who gave interesting information. I have the need to praise all the participants of the program; they were very interested in the subject. Every reflection was vivid with questions and discussions. The group not only showed great interest, but also respected every time that was set and therefore we were on time on all of our activities. It was a great pleasure working on this project and making it an amazing one.

4. Sara Stojaković

The overall program was, in my opinion, very beneficial for both sides. For me, as a Bosnian, it was great experience to meet people from different country and to learn from them about their communities. I found many similarities between the two countries, even though I thought there would be no resemblance.

The program showed our guests the real picture of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the views of youth.

We had visited places that are of huge importance for Bosnians and that speak about Bosnian history. We had listened to the people who were relative for the subject and who gave us a full insight of the story.



To conclude, I learned a lot about the current situation in Spain, youth perspective on events that happened in Spanish history. I had an amazing experience of being representative of my country.

5. Jasmina Hasanović

To begin with, I want to say that we were delighted to have an opportunity to work with a group that was so deeply interested in every topic we discussed.

It was obvious that this group of young people was carefully selected, because all of them were very eager to learn and share their thoughts and ideas. I really appreciate how interested they were even though some of them already knew a lot about political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The most important thing for me was seeing how people from different countries connect over a similar topic/something we have in common. I don't think anything was missing from the experience. Moreover, the overall experience exceeded my expectations. I am happy that everyone was open to talk about anything and that both groups learned a lot about the other.

The highlight for me was hearing what people think of things that are already very well known in Bosnia and Herzegovina and hear other opinions, other perspectives from people who are not personally connected to those things. On the other side, we as a Bosnian group learned a lot about Spain and its history. Discussing historical cooperation between our hometowns - Barcelona and Sarajevo, gave us insight into future problem solving and hopes for a continued collaboration.

To summarize, the program was very beneficial for all of us in a way it crushed some stereotypes and broadened our views

