TOUCHING WAR

Touching War.
An ethnographic analysis of war tourism in Europe

Touching War. An ethnographic analysis of war tourism in Europe

Dichtbij de oorlog. Een etnografische analyse van oorlogstoerisme in Europa

Thesis

to obtain the degree of Doctor from the
Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the
rector magnificus

Prof. dr. R.C.M.E. Engels

and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board.
The public defence shall be held on

Friday 11 December 2020 at 11.30 hrs

by
Siri Rosa Driessen
born in Amsterdam

Erasmus University Rotterdam

Colofon

This project has been funded by the Research Excellence Initiative of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.
Project title: War! Popular Culture and European Heritage of Major Armed Conflicts

ISBN: 978-90-76665-44-3
Publisher: ERMeCC - Erasmus Research Center for Media, Communication and Culture. Doctoral Dissertation Series no. 23
Design: Nora Steenbergen
Printing: Ipskamp Printing
Dust jacket: Drukkerij Kaboem

Doctoral committee:

Promotors:	Prof. dr. S.L. Reijnders
	Prof. dr. M.C.R. Grever
Other members:	Prof. dr. W. Klinkert
	Prof. dr. C.R. Ribbens
	Prof. dr. A. Rigney

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"We are being moved by things. And in being moved, we make things"
—Sara Ahmed, 2010

Undoubtedly, the theme of movement runs throughout this project. Movement is intrinsically linked to tourism and travel, to relocation (to put in a military term), but just as much to emotions. This project has not only allowed myself to move—on a daily basis from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, and more incidentally for fieldwork and conference visits—but it has also caused me to be moved by the places I witnessed, the people I met, and the stories I heard. Without these experiences of movement and moving experiences, this book wouldn't be here.

My sincere thanks go to my supervisors: Stijn Reijnders and Maria Grever. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do a PhD with you, and I've learned a lot throughout the process. I very much appreciate your trust in letting me plot my own course throughout this project. Stijn, I thank you for your continuing enthusiasm, your optimism, and your capacity to put me back on track whenever I got lost in the side-lines. Maria, your constructive criticism, your constant involvement with this project, and your eye for detail have been important to me.

This project couldn't have been possible without the help of my interviewees. Without your openness and willingness to share the sometimes-difficult stories with someone you hardly knew, I would've been nowhere. Therefore, I remain indebted to you. Victoria, thanks for conducting the fieldwork in Lithuania. You've been a great research assistant.

Several institutions and persons have helped me to make this research possible. I want to thank the *Dutch Institute for Military History*, the Netherlands Defence Academy, the *Dutch Veterans Institute*, and the *Action Reconciliation Service for Peace* for assisting me throughout this project. Your support has been highly valuable. Muhamed Durakovic, thank you for welcoming me to Srebrenica, for sharing your story, and for having your family take care of me when I was ill. I also want to thank the members of the project group 'Back with a mission' for sharing their insights with me.

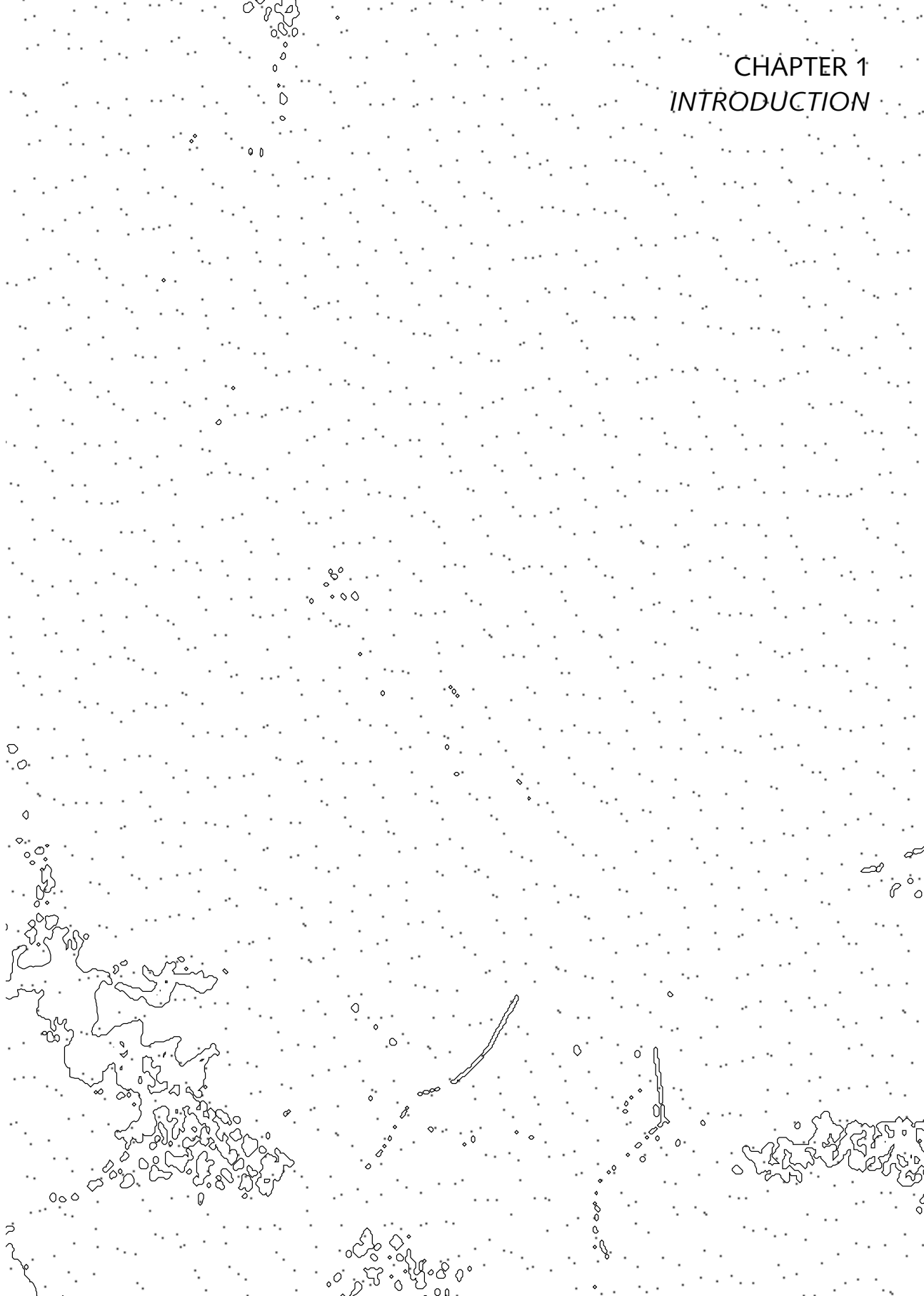
Being part of different research groups at the *Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication* has allowed me to get to know many different and clever scholars. I want to thank the members of the project group *War! Popular Culture and European Heritage of Major Armed Conflicts* for the productive research meetings, site-visits, and dinners. I am grateful to the members of the 'tourism and media' research group (for the sake for a better name) for the many of moments of feedback, brainstorming retreats, and friendships. My colleagues at the *Center for Historical Culture*, the *Erasmus Research Center for Media, Culture and Communication* and the department of Arts and Culture Studies

have made me feel welcome at the university. Thank you!

There are some colleagues that I want to thank in particular. Laurie, thank you for making me feel at home from day 1, for your kind nature, and your friendship. Lise, thanks for the countless train rides, café work sessions, and talks about our favorite recipes. Shirley, Leonieke, Emily, Abby: you've been great office mates and friends. Min, I'm glad we've been in this process together, and I hope to visit you sometime in Shanghai. Naomi, you've been such a nice friend and fellow soccer enthusiast throughout these years. Apoorva, Camila, Lénia, Susan: I thank you for your kindness and continuous support. Janna, I am grateful for your guidance during my first teaching experiences. Anouk, I really enjoyed chairing the *ERMeCC* PhD club with you. History girls, thank you for your engagement with the project and me. Fellow PhD's at the *ESHCC* and the *Huizinga Research School for Cultural History*: thanks for the nice interactions, PhD sessions, and off-campus activities that helped me to blow off some steam.

Dear friends and family, I am so lucky to have you around me. To those who know me, it comes as no surprise that playing soccer is important to me, in particular because of all the friendships made on the field. Carmen, Corine, Floor, Francien, Johanna, Linda, Marloes, Marte, Marthe, Mayke, Maud, Nadine, Naomi, Sabien and of course Martin, thank you for the weekly matches, collective holidays, podcasting experiences, and everything else. Art school friends Brigitta, Eva, May, and Roos, you always surprise me with your perspective on things, and I cherish our long-lasting friendship. Milenna, Odile, Tesse, even though we now live at quite some distance from each other, you have been (and still are!) important to me throughout the years. Evelien, I particularly thank you for drawing my attention to researching veteran's experiences. Nora, I am very happy you've designed this book.

Finally, my family. Grandparents, I wish I could've shared this moment with you. Luckily I have you, great-aunt Beppie, to answer all my questions on experiencing war as a young girl. Parents-in-law, thank you for your support and the continuous supply of freshly harvested vegetables. My brother Elmer, I appreciate your humor and general sense of optimism. My parents Paul and Josée, you are always there for me and are always the first to celebrate the important moments in my life with me. Thank you so much for everything. Jan-Jaap, you've been through this process with me from the beginning to the end: from practicing my job interview to correcting the final mistakes in the manuscript. You've even managed to find some joy in practicing war tourism! Thank you for being such a valuable person in my life. Your curiosity, enthusiasm, love, and kindness never stop to amaze me.



If there is one image that keeps fascinating me, it is a photo I took of a group of people posing in front of a signpost that announces the direction of the east Bosnian town of Potočari. Their flags, heavy boots, sporty attire, and Nordic walking poles hint at the activity they are involved in: walking the annual Marš Mira (Peace March) through the Bosnian countryside in order to commemorate the victims of the Srebrenica genocide of 1995. During the Marš Mira, participants follow the route that refugees from Srebrenica took in order to escape the Bosnian-Serb army and get to safer territories, but in the reverse direction. Starting in Nezuk, a small village close to the city of Tuzla, participants of the Marš Mira walk approximately 75 kilometers to Potočari, the location of the memorial for the genocide and the cemetery where the remains of victims are buried.[1] The three-day march attracts thousands of national and international participants each year. Although the first editions of the march had a lot of survivors, relatives, and locals among their participants, the more recent editions have predominantly been joined by people without direct connection to the events that occurred in July 1995 (Hoondert, 2018).

The signpost is the first visual clue that the walkers have reached the final stage of the journey and are approaching the memorial—from there, it is only a few kilometers downhill before they enter the cemetery. The signpost provides participants with the proof that they have made it to the end of the route after three exhausting days of walking and camping. But it also marks something else. Because participants complete this last descent to Potočari in silence in order to contemplate and commemorate the dead, the signpost symbolizes the transition between two different zones: from a zone where it is permissible to engage in 'touristic' behavior such as taking pictures in front of a place sign to a zone where the unwritten rules of visiting a place of pain and sorrow apply, culminating in the memorial itself. There, it seems more difficult to pose for the camera and smile.

The image of people taking photos of each other at the Potočari signpost keeps intriguing me, because it gives rise to so many questions about the nature of the Marš Mira and its participants. Why are they there? In what ways are they touched by the conflict? What do they expect to gain from their journey? And why would they pose smilingly in front of a place name that stands for death and suffering? On a more general plain, the photo prompts me to think about the relation between war and tourism, and specifically the act of looking. Tourism is traditionally described as an activity defined by the opportunity to gaze

1 These are the remains of the victims that have been identified—approximately 1000 bodies still have to be found (Toom, 2020).

upon worlds and scenes different than one's own (Urry, 1990; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Taking pictures therein plays an important role. As tourism implicates a "collection of signs" (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4), photography allows tourists to create proof of their collection of signs. Therefore, what tourists gaze upon and take photos of is culturally mediated: the signs that are sought by tourists are the signs that culture has taught them to search for (MacCannell, 1976; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Thus, a photo of a signpost becomes a symbol or collector's item for the tourist who has reached a specific destination.

John Urry's view on tourism can be criticized for several reasons. First, the concept of the tourist gaze puts a lot of emphasis on visual experiences of place. Yet, the question is whether tourism is constituted by such visual experiences of place alone. Veijola and Jokinen (1994), for example, emphasize the bodily and sensitive character of the touristic experience, and argue that places are experienced through the body, and with all senses. In a similar vein, Crouch and Desforges (2003) state that tourism revolves around embodied encounters with place. 'Being there' is an important part of the tourist experience too. Second, the perspective on the role of tourism in daily life is changing. Whereas tourism is traditionally seen as an activity that takes place outside of daily life and that concerns visual encounters with the lives of others, it is increasingly comprehended as an integral part of the lives of many people living in the global North. Therefore, the separation between mundane daily practices and the extraordinary world of tourism has become less defined (Edensor, 2007). Third, experiences of tourism have become more diverse. People not only engage in tourism for fun and entertainment but also travel in search of, for instance, education, volunteering, and self-improvement, or seek meaningful encounters during a trip (Cohen, 2011; Waysdorf, 2017). This diversification of touristic activities has stimulated researchers to focus on the plurality of experiences instead of on proposing general truths about the nature of 'the tourist' (Uriely, 2005, p. 205). Lastly, the recent turn to affect and emotion in the social sciences and humanities has also permeated into tourism studies, and has instigated research about the affective and emotional dimensions of tourist experiences (Buda, 2015a). These critiques are particularly relevant when studying war tourism—a form of tourism that comprises affective, meaningful, or educational experiences. Still, despite these shifts in academic perspectives, the touristic gaze has never completely disappeared from the debates on (war) tourism, and continues to be an important concept in understanding the relation between the tourist and the world.

These developments in thinking about the nature of tourism encourage an approach that acknowledges the diversity of war tourism; an approach in

which being there, seeing, feeling, touching, engaging, thinking, re-enacting, learning, and reflecting are all considered to be part of the war tourist's experience, and in which the differences between individual tourists are recognized. In this dissertation, I adopt such a multisided approach. I will argue that war tourism (more on terminology later) should be understood as a phenomenon that revolves around the possibility of engaging with place-bound war memories and histories in an embodied, affective, and meaningful way. Through four empirical case studies, I draw an image of the way different groups of people—the military, veterans, volunteers, and participants of the Marš Mira—motivate, experience, and value their visits to former war sites in Europe that are related to twentieth-century conflicts.

This research starts with the following research question in mind: Why and how are different groups of people drawn to former war sites associated with twentieth-century conflicts in Europe? The main research question is supported by the following subquestions:

1. What motivates specific groups of people to visit former war sites and how do these groups experience their visit?
2. What meanings do specific groups of people ascribe to their visit and what processes of identification take place?
3. How do these personal motivations, experiences, and reflections connect to existing ideas on war tourism in Europe?

Through the first subquestion, I adopt a common approach to studying tourism, one that focuses on motivations and experiences. This approach enables me to draw comparisons with earlier research about war tourism. The second subquestion allows me to delve deeper into the visitor experience by focusing on processes of reflection, meaning making, and identification. It also assists me in exploring the role of the visitor as a mediator between the past and the present. The third subquestion helps me to clarify the ideas and narratives circulating around war tourism.

In order to answer these questions, I have employed four empirical case studies. Three of these studies are predominantly based on in-depth interviews with visitors, the fourth on participant observation. The four case studies focus on different groups of people that visit former war sites—groups of people that all have specific reasons to visit these sites and that seem to defy the label of the general 'day tourist': the military, volunteers, war veterans, and peace marchers. These groups of people all have an established or desired connection with particular wars and the places associated with those wars. The sites that they

visited are associated with twentieth-century wars that (partially) took place in Europe: the First World War, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the wars in former Yugoslavia. Put together, these four case studies allow me to analyze the differences and similarities between various types of visitors, sites, and wars.

Currently, war tourism is a popular topic of research. Yet, a limitation of much of the conducted research is the focus on 'general' visitors who undertake trips to iconic former war sites. As a consequence, less is known of those visitors that are less easy to classify as 'tourists.' By means of scrutinizing four specific groups of visitors, I aim to get a better understanding of the experiences of these groups, and give more depth to the concept of 'war tourism.' Furthermore, concentrating on specific groups of visitors enables me to take a broader perspective than the tourist perspective alone: it allows me to take into account the cultural and societal embedding of the experiences of these groups of people. Hence, I aim to provide insight into the many layers, complexities, and tensions that pertain to war tourism. In times in which the so-called 'experience economy' (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) appears to be thriving, it is pertinent to understand how such experiences are performed in a form of tourism that revolves around war, death, and suffering—a form of tourism that seems at odds with the 'spectacle' that the experience economy suggests.

The societal relevance of this research first of all lies with the investigated groups of visitors and the organizations they belong to: military education specialists, veteran and volunteer organizations, and everyone engaged with commemorations. These groups of visitors and organizations can benefit from the results of this study, and might be able to reflect on their practices because of it. Then, a more comprehensive understanding of visitors' motivations, experiences, and reflections will be able to help heritage and tourism professionals better cater to the needs of a diversifying group of visiting people. Lastly, the results of this research will contribute to enhancing the understanding of the role that war tourism plays in individual and collective processes of working through the past, in different forms of commemoration, and in formal and more informal history education. As such, this research is of value to everyone involved in these processes and practices.

The structure of the remaining part of this introductory chapter is as follows. First, I reflect on the phenomenon of war tourism, its history, the development of scientific insight into the motivations and experiences of war tourists, and issues around the framing of war tourism and the terminology used. Second, I discuss the general concepts and theories relevant to this dissertation. I explore the connection between place, memory, and identity, and delve into the act

of secondary witnessing. The chapter ends with an outline of the dissertation.

War tourism

The practice of visiting former war sites knows a long history. Generally, the battlefields of Waterloo are mentioned as the first sites that attracted tourists, but preceding this, small-scale initiatives have also taken place (Baldwin & Sharpley, 2009; Butler & Suntikul, 2013b; Towner, 2013). In the course of the nineteenth century, war tourism became a more frequently occurring phenomenon. The developing media played an important part herein: by reading about war in the emerging newspapers, by seeing the first photographs of war, and even viewing representations of war in paintings, theater plays, re-enactments, dioramas and the like, many nineteenth-century citizens became acquainted with stories of war. The battlefields of the Crimean War of 1854–1856, for instance, attracted travelers from all over Europe in order to witness the spectacle of war, both during the battles and in the aftermath (Keller, 2001, p. 11). Likewise, the battlefields of the American Civil War of 1861–1865 received touristic visits (Gatewood & Cameron, 2004; Lloyd, 1998, p. 23). The increasing number of people visiting war sites in the nineteenth century was not only caused by the growth in the opportunities to travel and tourism in general, but also by a changing attitude towards commemorating (Lloyd, 1998, p. 21). Under the influence of nineteenth-century nationalism and the development of a sense of national identity, former war sites and cemeteries gained a sacred status, and symbolized the successes and sacrifices of a nation (Lloyd, 1998, p. 23; Slegtenhorst, 2019, p. 213). Thus, visiting those sites became an act of patriotism.

While researchers predominantly frame nineteenth-century war tourism as an attempt to engage with the heroic character of war, where war heroes died honorable deaths, early twentieth-century war tourism is often placed within a framework of mourning and commemoration (Winter, 1995), and even a 'civic cult of the dead' (Ariès, 2008, p. 550). This shift in perspective seems to be caused by the destructive character of the First World War—the war that affected so many people in Europe and beyond. The omnipresence of memories of the First World War also gave rise to discussions about the former battlefields and the people that visited them. Were these battlefields places that only belonged to those who were personally involved in a war, like military veterans? Or were they rather places that everyone affected by a war could visit? First World War veterans, for example, sometimes had difficulties with the presence of mourning mothers and widows at the former battlefields, because their presence did

not comply with the veterans' memory of the war (Lloyd, 1998, pp. 169–170). Here, the debate about who is allowed on the battlefield seems to surface, a debate that is still ongoing. The effects of this continuing debate can be distinguished in discussions about the use of terms like 'tourists,' 'pilgrims,' 'mourners,' 'voyeurs,' 'searchers,' 'travelers,' or 'visitors' in order to characterize the people who undertake trips to former war sites.

Where earlier studies (e.g., Lloyd, 1998; Mosse, 1990; Seaton, 1996, 1999, 2000; Walter, 1993; Winter, 1995) have focused on the history of commemorating war, its victims, and past visitors of war sites, more recent studies in war tourism have shifted their perspective to the motivations and experiences of contemporary visitors (e.g., Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011; Dunkley, Morgan, & Westwood, 2011; Hughes, 2008; Iles, 2006, 2012; Isaac & Ashworth, 2011; Isaac & Çakmak, 2014, 2016; Koleth, 2014; Winter, 2010). The motivations and experiences of these visitors are thereby seen as a starting point for finding explanations for the growth in the number of visitors at former war sites—and as such, aim to provide an understanding of the contemporary fascination for visiting sites of war, death, and suffering (e.g., Henderson, 2000; Iles, 2006; Scates, 2002; Winter, 2011). This fascination is often seen as an expression of 'dark tourism' or 'thanatourism,' but, as I will argue later on, the applicability of these concepts is disputable in this context.

A significant number of contemporary studies that investigate the motivations and experiences of contemporary war tourists focus on visitors to sites that hold a strong position in the collective memory of a specific nation, or alliance of nations. Think, for example, of Gallipoli as the place that embodies the ANZAC involvement in the First World War, a place that lives on in the collective memories of people of Australian and New Zealand descent and welcomes many visitors from those countries every year (Scates, 2011). The same goes for the area around Ypres—an area of high importance for the British and their involvement in the Great War (Dunkley et al., 2011; Winter, 2011). Another often used approach to studying contemporary war tourists is to focus on the locations that exemplify bodily violence and ethnic cleansing: Auschwitz, Srebrenica, the Somme, and outside Europe, the Killing Fields in Cambodia, remnants of the war in Vietnam, and the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (e.g., Biran et al., 2011; Cooper, 2006; Henderson, 2000; Winter, 2012). These locations have become icons for the horrors of war, not only because of the many atrocities that they have known, but also because their story suited the general conceptions and emotions about the conflict the best, and they found themselves located in areas welcome to visitors. 'Tourism is highly selective,' states Winter (2009, p. 614), and it is indeed important to realize that the best-known and most appealing

war sites obtained their popularity not only because of their close relation with a war event or place within collective memories, but also because they were marketed as such. The question is whether visits to less iconic sites give rise to similar experiences as those to the well-known ones. By including different types of sites in this research—from iconic and commercial to highly personal—I aim to shed light on this issue.

Additionally, the touristification of iconic sites has consequences for some specific groups of people visiting those sites. Podoshen and Hunt (2011, p. 1336), for example, found that tourists with a Jewish background sometimes refrained from visiting sites in eastern Europe that are associated with the Holocaust because of the difficulties they had with the coexistence of a Holocaust tourist industry and pertinent anti-Semitism in eastern Europe. Thus, the confrontation with the commercialization and touristification of former war sites might impact the groups of visitors that will be researched in this study. Because of their diverging backgrounds, I expect this confrontation will work out in quite different ways for the selected groups.

What motivates a contemporary war tourist to visit a former war site and how do tourists experience their visit? Previous research has found a variety of reasons to visit places associated with war. Although the results from these studies are only partially comparable due to the different types of sites, the types of visitors that were researched, and the way the researchers phrased and framed their questions and results, a few common motivations can be distinguished. In their study (n=975) about the motivations of visitors to the Dutch Second World War transit camp Westerbork, Isaac et al. (2019) distinguished three general types of motivations: 'memory,' 'gaining knowledge and awareness,' and 'exclusivity' (p. 9). Exclusivity here included motivations like 'I want to see the site to believe what happened,' 'I wanted to visit a famous tourist destination,' and 'I see it as a site for pilgrimage.' Biran et al. (2011) in a similar way categorized the motivations of visitors to Auschwitz (n=198) and created four distinct clusters of motivations: 'seeing it to believe it,' 'learning and understanding,' 'famous death tourist attraction,' and 'emotion.' I include these two specific examples not only to give an impression of a range of found motivations to visit a former war site, but also to underline the difficulties of categorizing and conceptualizing such tourist experiences. For instance, while Isaac et al. connect 'seeing it to believe it' to the urge to visit famous tourist attractions, Biran et al. conceptualize it in relation to concepts like authenticity and reality. Moreover, in my opinion, it would even be possible to argue that 'seeing it to believe it' is part of an experience of personal growth and education. Hence, statements on the motivations and experiences of war tourists are ambiguous, as it is difficult

to put a definitive label on these motivations and experiences. Additionally, it would be safe to say that as tourism is diversifying, so are the labels that can be put on the practices and activities that we associate with war tourism (e.g., Haskins & Rancourt, 2017). Because of these difficulties, qualitative approaches and in-depth studies of individual experiences might be more fruitful for understanding the motivations and experiences of war tourists, while also acknowledging the differences between specific groups of war tourists.

The difficulties in labeling activities associated with war tourism can also be discerned in the framing of the practice as a whole. A popular way to frame war tourism is by placing it either under the umbrella term of 'dark tourism' (Lennon & Foley, 1996) or the related concept of 'thanatourism' (Seaton, 1996). While the term 'dark tourism' in its current use pertains to tourism to any kind of site associated with death and suffering, thanatourism has a narrower focus on sites associated with death (Light, 2017). Although war tourism is only one of the types of tourism that are placed under dark tourism or thanatourism, many scholars that research war tourism regard it as a form of dark tourism. In particular, tourism to sites related to twentieth-century wars and genocides is often studied from a dark tourism or thanatourism perspective (Light, 2017, p. 280).

Despite the surge in studies about the phenomena of dark tourism and thanatourism, both concepts have received strong critiques, and their applicability is questioned by many (e.g., Biran et al., 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Hughes, 2008; Seaton, 2019; Stone, 2008). In an elaborate overview of two decades of dark tourism research, Duncan Light sums up the main critiques of dark tourism. First, argues Light, it is difficult to create convincing theories about the phenomenon, because dark tourism covers a whole range of different types of tourism—from watching live executions to visiting a war museum or a haunted house. There are simply too many differences between the tourists' motives, experiences, and on-site presentations. Second, the term 'dark tourism' suggests that tourists are attracted by death and disaster, for reasons of entertainment, sensation, or voyeurism, without much empirical proof to support this claim. Third, it is questionable whether dark tourism differs from heritage tourism, as many of the characteristics of both forms of tourism overlap. Furthermore, dark tourism is presentist, and includes a normative and Western conception of what qualifies as 'dark.' However, despite these critiques, which I endorse, it is undeniable that the activity of visiting places of death and suffering remains a topic that intrigues many people, both in- and outside the academic world. This is illustrated by the more than 170 studies conducted about dark tourism and thanatourism between 1996 and 2016 (Light, 2017, p. 280). Nevertheless, in this study I neither rely on dark tourism or thanatourism as explanatory frameworks, for the aforementioned reasons.

These considerations about the different ways to label war tourism raise another question about frames: that of the validity of the term 'war tourism' itself. To this point, I have relied on the terms 'war tourists' and 'visitors' to describe people that go to former war sites. But these terms also have specific connotations. The term 'visitors' stresses the temporality of a stay and separates the visitors from the place they are at—you only 'visit' places that are not your own. Likewise, the term 'tourist' has specific (negative) connotations in the context of visits to former war sites. As alluded to in the first part of this introduction, tourism is often associated with passivity, consumption, superficiality, and fun—features that might not be ascribed to a visit to a former war site and that might also not be embraced by the various visitors. Should the label 'war tourist,' for example, be applied to survivors or relatives of victims? Probably not. Nevertheless, I have used the terms 'war tourists' and 'war tourism' in this introduction for the following reasons. First, connotations like passivity and superficiality are dated connotations that stem from late twentieth-century ideas about uniform mass consumption and mass tourism. As mentioned before, the rise of 'meaningful tourism' and the abundance of travel experiences in the lives of the middle class have changed the nature of tourism in the global North. Moreover, we live in times in which 'tourism' is also contested. Climate change and other crises encourage a reorientation of the place of tourism in contemporary life, a reorientation that could be accompanied by a change in the definition of the term 'tourism.' Second, the academic debate about the phenomenon of people visiting former war sites is strongly framed by the notion of tourism. In order to connect to these debates, it is necessary to make use of some of the terminology. Third, the same goes for the popular debate—although few people like to describe themselves as tourists, many still engage in what we would call 'touristic practices.' Hence, I use tourism in this introduction to describe general practices of visits to former war sites. In some of the empirical cases, however, the term 'war tourism' is less present, as the activities of some of the analyzed groups of visitors (the military and veterans) to a lesser extent perform touristic practices, and they might have more difficulty in recognizing themselves in that term.

In conclusion, in this section I have discussed the history of the phenomenon of war tourism and the developments in the research about war tourism, and in particular the framing. I have explained how this dissertation connects to, but also deviates from, existing studies on war tourism. I have argued that it is essential to let go of simplifying or generalizing terms such as 'dark tourism.' Instead, I stress that it is important to integrate more fundamental theories on

place, memory, and identity in research on war tourism. That is the goal of the following sections. First, I delve into the relation between place, memory, and identity, and second, I give attention to authenticity and the role of the war tourist as secondary witness.

Places of memory

What draws people to visit tangible places that are associated with former wars and conflicts? In order to get a better grasp of this question, it is helpful to discuss theories from the fields of philosophy and memory studies that revolve around the relation between place, memory, and identity—a relation that is crucial for understanding visitors' motivations for, experiences of, and reflections on their visit. Studies that focus on the relation between place, memory, and identity are often supported by theories from phenomenological philosophies, where the bodily experience of place has been discussed extensively. Influenced by Immanuel Kant's remarks on the interconnectedness of place and the body, phenomenological philosophers have defined place as something that is expressed, constituted, and perceived through the body (Casey, 1997, pp. 204–218). In the early twentieth century, Edmund Husserl, who is seen as the founder of phenomenology, argued that the body formed the center of all human experiences (Casey, 1997, p. 218). In the middle of the twentieth century, Maurice Merleau-Ponty further developed Husserl's theories on the interdependence of place and the body. Merleau-Ponty famously regarded the body as something that inhabits space rather than something that is just 'in' space (2012 [1945], p. 140). As such, places are always experienced through the body, and place experiences are inherently individual and subjective.

Merleau-Ponty's work has been very influential in the development of phenomenological theories about the subjective and bodily experience of place. Where Merleau-Ponty's work considers a general approach to experiencing place that does not take into account particular experiences of particular places, others have included the role of memory, identity, and the imagination in their analysis of place experiences. Gaston Bachelard, a French contemporary of Merleau-Ponty, in his work (1994 [1957]) specifically focuses on intimate experiences of place. Inspired by psychoanalytical theory, Bachelard writes about the connection between place, memory, and imagination. Bachelard's ideas mainly focus on the way memories and images often have a 'placial' character and form an important part of someone's personality. According to Bachelard, it is the imagination that transforms general spaces into moving and loveable places

(Bachelard, 1994, p. xxxv; p. 12). Bachelard's works provide a helpful addition to Merleau-Ponty's insights for three reasons. First, Bachelard emphasizes the close connection between place, memory, and imagination. According to Bachelard, places are shaped by the imagination and live on in memory. Second, Bachelard helps us to realize that place experiences might result in the development of an emotional relation with specific places. This emotional relation with place is captured in the concept of topophilia—the love of places (Tuan, 1974). Third, albeit less explicitly, Bachelard also points to the role that places play in the formation of personal identity. The places we experience, imagine, and remember say something about who we are and who we want to become. Jeff Malpas, who has written extensively about place experiences, similarly states that places are closely connected to identity formation. According to him, the places people visit and experience at specific moments in time strongly influence the way people construct an identity, a sense of self (Malpas, 1999, p. 177). However, it is important to add that such processes of identity construction can be either temporal or more long-lasting, depending on the visitor and type of visit.

While Bachelard and Malpas explore the connection between place experience, personal memories, and personal identities, others underline the way places also serve as incubators of collective memories and identities. In his famous work on the *lieux de mémoire*, a study about the way (im)material monuments serve as landmarks for our failing collective memory (1984–1992), Pierre Nora explores the way sites of memory function as a means to transfer and shape collective memories and national identity. For Nora, memory sites can be seen as places where collective and personal memories and identities are solidified. Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire* has also become known for its emphasis on physical sites of memory, although Nora does recognize the existence of immaterial places of memory. The idea that people (and nations) need physical anchor points to connect and locate their memories has been appealing to many media and tourism scholars (e.g., Reijnders, 2011). In the case of war tourism, Nora's work seems to provide an explanation for the popularity of visiting tangible places of war and conflict—a visit to such a place could assist in consolidating and connecting personal and collective memories. Nevertheless, the value of *lieux de mémoire* also seems to lie with something else: the fact that the erection of, for instance, monuments or memorials also signifies a sense of care for those memories (Ruin, 2018). Places of memory therefore not only function as anchor points for personal and collective memories but also have a more symbolic role, as they confirm the continuing (and mythical) presence of the past in contemporary society (Ruin, 2018, pp. 163–164).

Summarizing, phenomenology offers valuable theories that assist in gaining

a deeper understanding of the motivations to visit former war sites as well as contemporary cultural narratives on war tourism. Personal and collective memories are interconnected (e.g., Halbwachs, 1992), and *lieux de mémoire* are thought to assist in strengthening collective memories. As such, although place experiences are subjective, they are always embedded in a societal context. Thus, a visit to a former war site should also be considered as the result of processes of memory politics, and may give rise to tensions when personal memories do not match national discourses about the past. Moreover, visiting memory places may impact one's identity and might even result in the development of an affective relation with place. Furthermore, the theories discussed suggest that visiting a site provides someone with an 'authentic' or 'unique' experience. In a time in which experiences of authenticity and uniqueness seem to be valued quite a bit, such experiences might be regarded as significant.

Witnessing 'authentic' traces of war

In the previous section, I discussed the relation between place, memory, and identity in order to find a theoretical explanation of the motivations and experiences of war tourists, as well as cultural narratives on war tourism. In this section, I will further investigate these motivations, experiences, and narratives, by exploring the visitor's encounter with tangible traces of the past. I do this first by discussing the concept of 'authenticity,' and second by delving into the act of secondary witnessing.

Tourism is often explained as originating in a search for unique and authentic experiences (MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999). This is no different for tourism to former war sites: there, too, the sense of authenticity present on site is thought to be appealing (e.g., Cohen, 2011). Tourists who travel to such sites are attracted by the possibility of getting closer to the conflict, of personally encountering war history, and being confronted with its consequences. Where most people only learn about acts of violence through the media, physical sites seem to provide tourists with a truthful, authentic, and first-hand perspective on what happened. "The past cannot be grasped independently of location in place," concludes Malpas as well (1999, p. 180). Instead of the separated worlds of the observer and the observed, as embodied by the tourist gaze, tourism to sites of war and conflict might be conducted in order to try to access that different world—while knowing that this is never entirely possible. As such, attempts to get close to the past are subject to failure, while this predetermined failure also remains key to visiting former war sites. "We are seduced by a discourse

of authenticity that convinces us that it is actually possible to access the real," states Lisle (2004, p. 16). For Lowenthal, tourism to heritage sites allows people to 'mourn worlds known to be irrevocably lost—yet more vividly felt, more lucid, more real than the murky and ambiguous present' (Lowenthal, 1996, p. xv). As such, confrontations with 'authentic' traces of the past might generate intense emotional experiences.

Authenticity is a concept that has taken up a central position in early studies about both tourism and the contemporary reconstruction, representations, and consumption of history and heritage. As can be seen in Lisle's aforementioned remark, visitors therefore see 'authentic' traces of the past as means of providing access to truthful representations of the past, references and traces that have the power to affect people in different ways. Siân Jones (2010) criticizes this object-oriented approach to authenticity. According to her, the concept of authenticity gains its strength from the fact that it allows people to re-establish connections between them and the ever-fragmenting modern world (p. 197). As such, authenticity is negotiated, constructed, and produced in the relation between "people and things" (p. 200). Hence, for Jones, authenticity is not inherent to, for example, an object or site, but is created through networks and connections.[2] 'Authenticity,' then, also functions as a means to establish connections between the past and the present.

This reasoning exposes a tension that seems fundamental to understanding the interaction between visitors and former war sites. As mentioned at the start of this section, the search for 'authenticity' at historical sites is never completely satisfied, as the past is irrevocably gone and has become inaccessible. Hence, there is always a part of the sought experience that remains unfulfilled, an unfulfillment that actually gets emphasized at a former war site when the visitor is physically confronted with the fact that the past is irrevocably gone. While visits to former war sites confirm the absence and inaccessibility of the past, they also serve as a way to connect past and present—the histories presented on site are taken up by the visitors, and recounted to others later on. This double nature of visiting historical places, which appears to offer an 'authentic' presentation of the past, but at the same time confirms the inaccessibility of that past, is inherent to

2 Nevertheless, despite such developments in the conceptual approach to 'authenticity' and the ubiquity of the notion in the field of tourism practitioners, the popularity of the concept has started to wane in the academic world. This waning is caused by the growing realization that authenticity is a Western-centered concept that does not pertain to the international context that tourism is currently embedded in (Marschall, 2015b, p. 39). This does not mean that the sense of 'authenticity' caused by encounters with tangible traces of the past is not recognized anymore, but that the impossibility of applying it to different international contexts should be acknowledged.

the practice of visiting former war sites. As such, we see the emergence of the earlier mentioned tension between the desire for 'authentic' encounters with the past and to connect with it, as embodied by circulating ideas and narratives on (war) tourism, and the impossibility of ever completing this desire.

In order to get a better grasp of this double nature of visiting historical war sites, I now discuss the concept of witnessing in relation to war tourism. I consider the war tourist as a secondary witness in the process of producing historical knowledge by means of visiting an 'authentic' site. I will start this discussion with the work of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who extensively wrote on the role of the historian and the act of witnessing in the production of historical knowledge, and who has inspired me on this subject. In his final work, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004), Ricoeur discusses the theme of death in the writing of history (pp. 365–367). Following Michel de Certeau, Ricoeur equates writing history with the act of burying (p. 367). Writing history, according to him, confirms the absence of the past in the presence, just like the erection of a grave or memorial confirms the absence of the dead in life (p. 366). At the same time, in writing about the dead, in the act of burying, and in commemorating the deceased, a relation is established between the past and the present—the past is made absent, put at a distance, but still situated with respect to the present (p. 367). In a discussion on a similar passage by de Certeau, Hans Ruin argues relatedly that the separation between the past and the present, between the dead and the living, is too strict. According to him, 'the act of burial is not just about laying to rest and storing away but rather the center and starting point for a complex set of practices, rituals, and traditions that continue to care for and be with the dead' (Ruin, 2018, p. 165, his emphasis). As such, graves, monuments, and cemeteries both represent the absence of the past and establish a relation with that past. A similar process seems to occur with visits to former war sites: these visits confirm both the absence and inaccessibility of the presented events, while the act of visiting also provides a way to establish a relation with the past. An important feature of this relationship is generated by the aura of 'authenticity' present on site and the role that the visitors takes up during their visit.

When writing about the production of historical knowledge, Ricoeur assigns an important role to the witness and the testimony. For Ricoeur, a witness is not only someone who was present in a certain place at a certain time and recounts what s/he has seen by means of testimony, but is also someone who asks to be trusted. A witness asks to be believed, requests to be accepted by others, and allows her/himself to be questioned (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 164–165). As a consequence, a witness takes up the responsibility of coming up with a believable and trustworthy account of past events. Here, we see how taking up

the role of a witness is connected to a certain status, which is associated with the evidentiary nature of the position of the witness and the testimony created by the witness. According to Ricoeur, such testimonies "constitute the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (2004, p. 21). Therefore, "testimony is inscribed in the relation between past and present, in the movement of understanding the one by the other" (2004, p. 164), and 'reappears (...) at the level of the representation of the past through narratives, historical devices, and images' (2004, p. 161).

Ricoeur's analysis of the production of historical knowledge and the role of the witness and the testimony contains some interesting parallels with the practice of war tourism. Some scholars regard visitors as secondary witnesses. Patrizia Violi, for instance, discusses the way visitors to sites associated with war and conflict can be considered secondary witnesses to the traumatic events that are represented there. Violi mentions the Tuol Sleng prison in Cambodia as an example, a former school in Phnom Penh where many Cambodians were captured and killed by the Khmer Rouge (Violi, 2014). On the one hand, Violi argues, visitors do indeed "relive and renew the intrinsic testimonial nature of the site itself (..) and the act of visiting would be an act of testimony" (p. 60). On the other hand, according to Violi, we should be careful with assigning visitors a role that is professionally a task for historians. As secondary witnessing requires responsibility and the taking of a moral stance (p. 61), not all visitors might be willing or able to take up such a task. Because people's motivations to visit a site or museum differ greatly, not all visits are made with the purpose of composing a testimony (p. 61). Violi's nuances are important, as bearing witness can indeed be perceived as a burden that not everyone wants to take on. Nevertheless, with these nuances in mind, secondary witnessing still proves to be a relevant concept for comprehending the motivations and experiences of specific groups of war tourists. While testifying is associated with the judicial implications of witnessing, the act of secondary witnessing itself can also take place in a very personal context, and could in that sense be less burdensome and only of personal relevance.

Therefore, I would like to argue that secondary witnessing offers an interesting perspective on the role of war tourists, for the following reasons.[3] First, secondary witnessing shares some important characteristics with war tourism. Not only are 'seeing' and 'being there' highly important in war tourism and secondary witnessing, but they are also connected to a sense of truthfulness

3 Hereby, I take into account the fact that war tourists are a highly diverse group of people, and that the role they take up differs from person to person.

and validity. As discussed earlier on, tourists often visit former war sites in order to 'see it to believe it'—they are under the impression that what they see and experience at a site offers a truthful perspective on the past. Second, where the concept of 'authenticity' is associated with the idea that it is never possible to fully experience 'authenticity' at a former war site, the concept of secondary witnessing allows this impossibility to be recognized without diminishing the value of visiting a former war site—even without access to the 'authentic' past, the report of a secondary witness can still be significant. The nature of former war sites as places that embody a sense of the past causes visitors to be engaged in an act of secondary witnessing, by observing, feeling, and experiencing the 'proof' about the past that is present on site. In doing this, visitors make an attempt to continue the memory of a past event through all means available.

Third, as mentioned in the discussion on Ricoeur, Ruin, and de Certeau, visits to former war sites are characterized by a certain ambiguity: while the desire to visit a former war site might reside in the appeal of obtaining an 'authentic' view on the past, a visit to a former war site at the same time confirms the separation of past and present. The concept of witnessing contains this ambiguity as well: on the one hand, a witness is very much present when an event occurs. At the same time, the term also implies a separation from the event: the witness watches the event pass by without being part of it (e.g., Ricoeur, 2004, p. 164). Lastly, the responsibility that is associated with (secondary) witnessing—you have to provide a truthful account of what you saw happening—is also pertinent to war tourism. Recognizing this responsibility allows war tourism to be regarded as not only stemming from a desire for war historical entertainment, but it also alludes to tourists' desire to engage with a site, to put effort into making their visit significant and their story believable.

In conclusion, in this section I have reflected on the motivations and experiences of war tourists by means of looking into two concepts: first, the concept of 'authenticity,' and second, the concept of secondary witnessing. Both concepts connect to the double nature that visits to former war sites encompass, a double nature that is characterized by a tension between the desire for proximity while at the same confirming the distance to the past; on site, the past remains strange and familiar. In the empirical chapters of my study, I will further explore these concepts and ideas.

Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation revolves around the motivations, experiences, and reflections

of different groups of visitors to former war sites. After explaining the methodological choices that this dissertation is built upon in Chapter 2, I will present the first empirical study in Chapter 3. In this study, I analyze the motivations and experiences of Dutch officers and cadets during various military battlefield tours to former war sites in Europe. The focus of this chapter lies with the educational value of visiting former war sites: what does re-enacting the past at the site 'where it all happened' add to someone's insight into historical events? How do cognitive and physical experiences stimulate a place-bound understanding of the past? And what tensions arise between the individual experiences of the participants and the collective aims of the military battlefield tours?

In Chapter 4, I continue my focus on the Dutch military. But instead of investigating the experiences of army members that participate in military battlefield tours to prepare themselves for future wars, I look at those army members that undertake visits to former war sites to reflect on their military past. In this study, I analyze the motivations, experiences, and narratives of Dutch military veterans who undertook a return trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where they were located in the 1990s. I discuss the way such return trips function as means to process (traumatic) memories of the military deployment. How does a confrontation with physical references to the past help to work through memories of the past? In what ways do these confrontations stimulate the development of new and counter narratives of the Dutch deployment in former Yugoslavia?

In Chapter 5, I shift to an international group of visitors and investigate the experiences of volunteers who participate in volunteer summer camps on former war sites in Lithuania, France, and Italy. In this chapter, I focus on the search for a personal, affective, and immersive approach to learning and volunteering through tangible encounters with the past. However, while volunteers expect the summer camps to be impactful and positively emotional, sought impact and emotion are not always found. In this chapter, I therefore also discuss feelings of guilt, unease, and discomfort and the consequences of these feelings for the volunteers.

In Chapter 6, the last empirical chapter, I return to the Marš Mira and its participants. The tensions between war tourism, performed rituals, and memory activism form the main point of this chapter. As these tensions take place in a highly politicized memory culture, I give attention to the role of tourism within this culture as well.

Together, the empirical case studies assist in shedding light on different aspects of the experience of visiting former war sites—from education to emotions and activism. Yet, as I hope to demonstrate throughout these case studies, these aspects do return in all the different chapters. For instance, although

the emphasis of Chapter 3 lies with the educational character of the military battlefield tours, I show that identity building and emotion also play an important role during the tours. Conversely, while I predominantly focus on emotion and affect in Chapter 5, I do explore the role of history education in the war-themed summer camps. As such, the different case studies allow me to compare the different aspects of the appeal of visiting former war sites, and as such help me to answer the main research question. I will turn to such a comparison in Chapter 7, where I present the general conclusions of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodological choices that underpin this research project. I will first delve into the research paradigm and the research approach. Then, I will elaborate on the research design, methods of data collection, and modes of analysis. I will conclude with a reflection on the ethics of researching sensitive topics and trauma, on the notion of gender within this project, and will consider my position as a researcher.

Research paradigm

As a researcher with a background in history, cultural studies, and social sciences, I have learned to work within different research paradigms. These different paradigms all have had an influence on the epistemological foundations referred to in this dissertation. As a historian, trained to interpret historical sources, I have located myself within the hermeneutical tradition, and have relied on the works of hermeneutic philosophers like Hans Georg Gadamer. His work has helped me to consider knowledge as created through dialogue and as always embedded within a specific historical, cultural, and situated context. This historically-effected consciousness (2004, p. 355), as Gadamer calls it, defines knowledge as particular, always in movement, without ever reaching a final truth.

The classical hermeneutic approach to knowledge creation, understanding, and interpretation remains rather optimistic, as its postponement of finding truth causes it to avoid judgement. Cultural studies have taught me to adopt a more critical perspective. What are the power dynamics at play in the creation of knowledge? Cultural studies have also encouraged me to focus on agency: who is allowed to speak at which moment? And which groups are left out? As such, my original hermeneutic approach has merged with a more critical one, that might—to a certain extent—be captured by the term critical hermeneutics (Roberge, 2011). This term is sometimes used to classify the work of another philosopher referred to in this dissertation—Paul Ricoeur.

In social sciences, I have learned to focus on subject experiences, and consider them valuable sources that construct and reflect on a reality. While hermeneutic research focuses on the interpretation of phenomena and experiences, social science research deals with the subjects of these experiences and phenomena (Thirsk & Clark, 2017, p. 3). As such, a social scientist researches personal experiences and tries to interpret the underlying patterns, variations and frames of these experiences. This approach is captured in the paradigm of phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on the way individuals experience

the world, and asks the researcher to put any prejudices or preconceptions on hold by means of 'bracketing' (e.g., Bryman, 2012, p. 30). Phenomenological research tends to fully engage with a subject's world view, and as such presents a descriptive and detailed account of the sometimes-trivial lived experiences from the perspective of a subject (e.g., Laverty, 2003, p. 24), before moving on to interpreting these experiences (Bryman, 2012).

Although the research paradigms discussed seem to differ quite a bit on paper—how can one bracket one's prejudices while at the same time recognizing the inescapability of those prejudices?—in practice these traditions overlap on many aspects and are often applied to the same project. In this project, I have not rigidly adhered to one specific research paradigm, but relied on different philosophical inspirations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). At the start of each of the empirical projects, I have taken up a phenomenological approach. I have tried to engage with the experiences of the subjects I researched, by joining them in their activities, by observing their behavior on site and by writing down detailed fieldnotes. I have continued this approach in the interviews. I spent a lot of time asking the interviewees to describe their personal experiences to me, tried to interrupt them as little as possible and attempted to empathize with their life-world (e.g., Laverty, 2003, p. 29). I did all this while recognizing that it is impossible to fully engage with these experiences without relying on personal prejudices. As Gadamer already concluded, prejudices form the starting point of a process of interpretation (2004, p. 298).

The data that was created during the fieldwork and interviews should be seen as an interpretation of the subject's experiences and life world. This interpretation is continued in the analysis of the fieldnotes and interview transcripts, and my voice as a researcher is brought more to the front. Still, in doing this, I have tried to allude to the phenomenological approach by paying attention to the context and life world of the subject when writing about an experience, for example by taking up a lot of quotes in the analysis and analyzing them in-depth, or by paying attention to the particularity of some of the experiences. Moreover, at some point in the analysis, I took the opportunity to add a more critical perspective as well. Norman Denzin recently called for qualitative research to become more critical (Denzin, 2017). I agree that a critical voice can be a valuable addition to a qualitative analysis in case the data allows for it and the researcher has honestly and thoroughly researched the subject's positions. Hence, this dissertation presents a critical hermeneutic phenomenology (for the sake of a better term), in which knowledge is described, interpreted and criticized.

Research approach and design

In this dissertation, experiences and processes of meaning making take up an important role. My interest in meaning and experience is reflected in the qualitative research design that I have taken up—a qualitative approach allows to research personal experiences and meaning making in-depth, and leaves room for marginal and deviant perspectives. The decision to opt for a qualitative research design is rooted in the fact that I am interested in the way visitors experience and make sense of their trips and stays on former war sites. These experiences and ways of making sense can be complex and sensitive, especially when pertaining to trauma. Experiences on former war sites include multiple and contradictory feelings and emotions, and in order to understand those, it is necessary to spend a considerable amount of time with the visitors talking about their experiences and trying to grasp those complexities and sensitivities. Ways of making sense of experiences of visits to former war sites can in a similar way be complex and sensitive, in particular because war tourism is surrounded with debates about its morality. These debates influence the way visitors talk about their experiences. Qualitative research enables the interviewer and the interviewee to explore those complexities together. Another reason for choosing a qualitative research design is the incorporation of groups of people who have suffered from trauma. When researching traumatic experiences, it is crucial to give the participants the agency to voice their stories and listen patiently.[1] This is best done through a qualitative lens.

This project is designed around four case studies that are based on empirical research: the study on the military battlefield tours, the veteran return trips, the volunteer summer camps, and the participants of the Marš Mira. The introduction has been written after I finished the empirical work, and functions as a further and more fundamental exploration of theories and concepts that run through the empirical cases. As such, the theories discussed in the introduction present a more general conceptualization of place experiences, which I deemed important for understanding the phenomenon of war tourism. Theory that is directly related to the empirical cases is discussed in the respective empirical chapters.

The body of the dissertation is composed of empirical case studies. Case study research is often criticized for being difficult—or even impossible—to generalize, and as such lacking potential as scientific research method. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 221) states that case study research is generally critiqued for lacking theory building, reliability and validity (p. 221). Yet, he argues, such criticism is based on misunderstandings and an over-simplification of the nature of case

1 I elaborate on this in the penultimate section of this chapter.

study research (p. 221). As stated above, within a phenomenological approach, a subject's view and experience of the world is considered highly valuable, because these views and experiences mirror 'real' life in a detailed and nuanced way. Theories that are derived from those views and experiences are, unavoidably, context bound. Yet, Flyvberg continues, so is all social scientific knowledge (p. 224). Additionally, by presenting detailed accounts of an experience or world view, case studies enable a thorough understanding of those experiences and views. In this role, case studies can function as (in)validators of existing theories, and as such contribute to theory building (p. 228).

In this dissertation, I use case study research to, indeed, be able to present and analyze detailed accounts of visitor experiences. Rather than bringing about generalizable knowledge, I aim to show the variety and uniqueness of visitors' experiences, and offer ways to understand and interpret these experiences. Still, I am convinced that such an approach allows for the production of knowledge that can be insightful for many people, either through the fine-tuning of the used concepts by means of examples from the lived world. In doing this, I realize that this analysis is just one possible analysis made at a specific moment in time, place, and culture.

This dissertation contains four case studies, and as such relies on a comparative case study approach. This implies that I expected the content of the cases to be—to a certain extent—comparable (Ragin, 1992, p. 1). Indeed, the cases deal with a similar phenomenon: the motivations, experiences, and reflections of different groups of visitors to former war sites. The possibility to compare the cases formed one of the reasons for selecting the specific cases in the sample. Yet, I purposefully selected cases that differ enough to be able to show the variety of visitor experiences and different dimensions of war tourism. For example, the chapter on the military battlefield tours focuses predominantly on learning and education through visiting former war sites, while the chapter on the veterans is centered around processing memories and creating narratives, and the chapter on the volunteers is concerned with affect and emotion. Moreover, after selecting the four cases, the methodological approach of the different cases has been designed bearing the specificities of each case in mind—as each case study in my opinion should do. As such, there are minor variations in the way each case study was conducted.

Tools and methods

Below, I explain the more practical methodological choices made throughout this project. I discuss the selection of the cases, sampling, data collection through interviews and participant observation, and the way I analyzed the data and wrote up the results.

Selection of the cases

This project is built on various case studies clustered around different groups of people. After writing an initial literature review on war tourism, I concluded that quite a lot is known about the experiences of general visitors to former war sites, and that these experiences are relatively similar. Less is known about visitors who have a more specific reason to make a trip to a former war site. Hence, I decided to focus on different groups of people, which all have a specific relation to war and conflict, either by their profession, their personal interest, or circumstance. I was inspired by the idea that the more deviant cases provide more information about a phenomenon than the 'normal' ones do (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 229).

The process of selecting the cases occurred gradually. At the start of the project, I made an overview of potentially interesting groups of visitors. These groups were all characterized by the fact that they all seemed to want to gain something from their visit that was more than 'just' a touristic experience, either in the form of learning, processing, reflecting, commemorating, or experiencing personal growth and transformation. I started with the two cases on (former) military personnel: the military battlefield tours and the returning veterans. The study on the battlefield tours was designed to explore the educational value of visiting former war sites. The case on the returning veterans allowed me to investigate a different aspect of the military experience: the aftermath of a mission and the role that returning to personal memory sites has in processing wartime experiences. For these cases, I decided to focus on Dutch army members for two reasons (other than the reasons for academic relevance mentioned in the empirical chapters): military culture is a quite closed and particular culture, with its own rules, habits, and jargon, in the Netherlands as well as abroad. This culture is not always easy to understand for an outsider. As a native Dutch, I felt most comfortable studying the Dutch military, as I am most familiar with their culture, habits, and jargon. For the case on the veterans, the reasons for selecting the Dutch veteran return trips to Bosnia originate in the specific characteristics of the Dutch military involvement in former Yugoslavia and its aftermath. Still, while conducting this research, I also realized that Dutch research on the conflict in former Yugoslavia tends to focus

on the Dutch perspective on the event, and leaves out the point of view of others. This is why I found it important to include a case study on war tourism in former Yugoslavia that did not revolve around the Dutch. Consequently, the idea to scrutinize the Marš Mira was born. The case study on the volunteers allowed me to continue this focus on international participants, and compare experiences of different groups of people that visited sites related to various twentieth century conflicts in Europe.

Sampling of interviewees

Different sampling strategies have been used to select interviewees. In general, I relied on purposive sampling and specifically, criterion sampling. In criterion-based sampling, participants are selected based on specific criteria (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019, pp. 145–146). For example, the veterans needed to fit within two main criteria: they needed to be a veteran of (at least) one of the different Dutch missions to former Yugoslavia, and needed to have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina some moment after their mission or had plans to go there during my period of research. In all the cases, participants could voluntarily sign up to participate in the study, and thus, they are self-selected. Still, the 'grade' of self-selection differs per case: where the veterans who responded to calls in a magazine and on Facebook personally needed to take action to sign up for an interview, the summer camp volunteers were asked to participate on site and therefore didn't need to be that assertive.

There are some dangers to this way of sampling as there is a risk that only people with a specific interest in the topic or certain personal agenda might sign up for participation. Also, it could be possible that people with positive experiences were more willing to talk than people with negative experiences. The veterans seemed to have had the clearest agenda to participate: most of them wanted more veterans to know about their positive experiences of the return trip. Some veterans decided to speak to me because of their support of having the veteran return trip researched in a scientific way. Others were willing to talk to me because I was *not* a journalist. There was also a group that joined the project because they liked the idea that I did not only focus on Dutchbat 3 and Srebrenica, but also on the veterans of other missions. Although I recognize the risks of my sampling strategy, my experiences during the fieldwork were such that I do not see them as having impacted the results of the studies too much. For example, through talks with mental health professionals, veterans of other missions, and by following posts on social media, I learned that

those veterans who did not join the research or did not fit the criteria were also predominantly positive about their return trip. This has made me feel more comfortable in presenting my findings.

Preparing the interviews

In order to prepare the interviews, I first familiarized myself with the topic and research group by means of reading about them and by speaking to associated organizations, and conducted pilot interviews. As such, I learned about the general topic and about common opinions and attitudes. Based on this information and my own field of interest, I developed an interview guide. These interview guides can be found in the appendix. Interview guides are used in semi-structured interviewing to ensure that the same topics are covered in each interview, without losing the flexibility to probe deeper on certain topics, should the conversation develop in a certain direction (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

A research intern attended the volunteer summer camp in Lithuania and conducted all interviews there. Still, the same interview guide was used for all three summer camps that were studied. We discussed the interview guide together and spoke about potential follow-up questions. In order to familiarize the research intern with the topic, I asked her to write a small literature review. She also conducted a pilot interview with someone who participated in a volunteer summer camp in the past. As such, I made sure that her interviews would be as similar as possible to the ones I conducted myself later on.

Interviews

An interview is a specific kind of conversation, that is neither a reflection of daily life nor a completely artificial structure (e.g., Michael, 2017, p. 35). Knowledge that is produced during the interview is constructed collaboratively, and is—to a certain extent—dependent on the specific interview setting. The interviews were 'active'; which implies that they are regarded as a form of conversation in which interviewee and interviewee create meaning together (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). Therefore, the 'active interview' reflects a hermeneutical perspective on knowledge creation.

In total, 57 persons were interviewed for this research. 15 participants and guides of the military battlefield tours, 17 veterans, and 26 volunteers. One interviewee participated in two studies, because he both joined in the military

battlefield tour and had undertaken a return trip. One veteran was interviewed twice: before and after his holiday to Bosnia. Another veteran was briefly interviewed by phone before his upcoming trip, and interviewed more extensively afterwards.

All 58 interviews were conducted face-to-face and took place at the home of the interviewee or another location proposed by the interviewee. As such, I tried to have the interviewees feel as comfortable as possible during the interview. The volunteers were interviewed on the site of the summer camp. The volunteer could select the spot for the interview. In two cases this resulted in a walking interview, which turned out to work very well. I always started the interviews with a considerable amount of chit-chatting, in order to create a sense of mutual trust, and then explained the purpose of the study and the consent form. I also ensured them that there were no 'wrong' answers possible and that they could say everything they want to say, without any judgment. Only after this I turned on the recorder. All interviews started off with an exploration of the interviewees' background and their general interests, before moving on to the more concrete research topics. As such, I made sure I had sufficient contextual information about the interviewee that I could use for the analysis. Sometimes, the conversation continued after the recorder was stopped, and in those cases I have made notes. In some other cases, I also took notes on the interview setting and on any non-verbal behavior that would not be captured in the recording. All audio files have been transcribed verbatim, roughly half of them by me and half of them by a student assistant. Four interviews with battlefield guides and teachers have not been recorded for practical reasons, but extensive notes have been taken during the interview. All interview recordings and transcripts have been stored on a secure server of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Lastly, some remarks on language. The interviews with the military people and the veterans were conducted in Dutch, the native language of both them and me. The quotes that I have used in the chapters are therefore translations, and in the translations, I might—unavoidably, perhaps—have lost nuance, specifically of the jargon that the military is known for, as direct translations of such jargon do not always exist in English. The interviews with the volunteers were conducted in English, which was not the native tongue of any of the interviewees or the interviewers. The English proficiency of the interviewees differed, yet everyone was able to express him or herself relatively well. In the case an interviewee had to search for words, the student assistant and I asked them to use their native language, which we could understand most of the time. Still, two of the interviewees mentioned at the end of the interview that they would have liked to tell more, but were not able to, because of the language barrier. This is a shortcoming, yet, since we did get to know those interviewees during the summer camp quite well, I was able to draw a more elaborate image of their ideas.

Other data

In addition to the interviews, I collected other kinds of data too, which has helped me to triangulate the findings. In the case of the military battlefield tours, volunteer summer camps, and the Marš Mira, I conducted participant observation. I wrote down fieldnotes or recorded my thoughts about these observations whenever I could, either during or directly after a trip, or, in the case of the summer camps, on at least a daily basis. These notes have been used in the analysis. I also took a lot of photographs on site, which I merely used as reference for myself. In the case of the veterans, I did not do any participant observation. Still, during the interviews, the veterans showed me a lot of visual material, in the form of photos, films, and maps. Due to this, I was able to get a better impression of their mission and their return trip. The visual material proved to be a great stimulus for the veterans to talk about their memories. For instance, in one case, after a first hour rather mechanical hour of interviewing, talking about visual material stimulated the veteran to speak more naturally.

For the case on the Marš Mira, I have taken up a more ethnographic approach. I participated twice in the march, and observed participants along the way. I also had many conversations with my fellow marchers. I have relied on written fieldnotes that I made after each day of walking as well as on personal voice notes that I recorded when marching, and that I transcribed after returning from Bosnia. Hence, the data created for this case study is different from the other cases, as the emphasis lies with personal observations, conversations, and reflections, instead of on interview material, and the chapter on the Marš Mira should be read with this in mind.

Analysis

The interview transcripts and fieldnotes have been analyzed by means of thematic and narrative analysis, or a combination of the two, as a focus on themes only might obscure the narrative development present in an interview (e.g., Bryman, 2012). The specific types of analysis are described in the empirical chapters.

Besides for the chapter on the Marš Mira, the data on the march has been used for writing the introduction, and functions as a vignette to raise general issues and appearances of war tourism. Each of the analyses started with a reading and re-reading of the transcripts and fieldnotes. As such, I familiarized myself with the data and got an impression of the themes and narratives present in the interviews. This was followed by a first round of open coding. Then, I grouped these open codes under different themes. In a second round of coding I checked whether those themes indeed fit the interview excerpts and made alterations where necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then refined the categories and selected the most interesting and appealing quotes for the analysis. In the case of the military battlefield tours, I coded the transcripts with the software Atlas.ti. For the studies on the veterans and volunteers I relied on manual coding, through a system of colors and numbers, that I later on applied to the digital files. I used this method because I realized that having the printed transcripts in my hands stimulated me to always see each code and quote within the context of the interview—something that you might lose when using software.

Researching trauma and other sensitive topics

Scrutinizing visitors to former war sites can be complex. As most of the members of the different groups I have researched had a personal and/or professional relation or history with war, asking them questions about their past and their trips could evoke emotional and painful memories. Even for the interviewees who did not have a personal history with war and conflict, talking about war, violence and death could be difficult. Additionally, researching people with different national and ethnic backgrounds can be challenging, as different national and local takes on what happened during a war might clash and could cause tensions during an interview. This could result in a loss of trust or sense of security. I have put a lot of effort in making sure that the interview experiences were as smooth and pleasant as possible. Still, some interviewees got emotional during or after the interview.

In order to deal with possible sensitivities, emotional responses and tensions, I have relied on interviewing techniques used in oral history. This implies that the interviewer takes time to make the interviewee feel at ease, is clear about her purposes, let the interviewee take the lead in the story and interrupts as little as possible, doesn't purposely probe into traumatic memories—an interviewer is not a therapist –, and does not question the validity of the recounted memories or stories (Leydesdorff, 2014). This was predominantly

necessary in the case about the veterans, some of whom suffer(ed) from PTSD or other stress related conditions.[2]

Political sensitivities were present in the international settings, specifically in Bosnia. Bosnia is a country where ethnic tensions prevail and make up a considerable part of the daily life of its citizens. These tensions have an impact on how people discuss war history—or feel limited in doing so. Speaking about war is always political, and by asking certain questions, you adopt a political lens, which might not be desirable for a researcher. Doing social research is therefore both a blessing and a curse: on the one hand, focusing on personal experiences and subjective world views allows you to consider those experiences and world views indeed as subjective and different from the experiences of others. On the other hand, understanding and interpreting such experiences and views can be complex.

With regard to the impact of my own nationality, the most politically sensitive case was Bosnia, where my Dutch background might be perceived as offensive by some of the participants of the Marš Mira. Even though I predominantly stuck to participant observation here, I felt conscious of my background and have been careful when approaching people. Although I have been open to everyone about my Dutch nationality, I learned throughout my visits to Bosnia that my background made it impossible to ask certain questions or present my opinion on the course of the historical events, particular in relation to what the Dutch troops did or did not do (Simic, 2008). Even though the majority of the people I met were open-minded and did not seem to feel much resentment against Dutch citizens, I felt this topic was a no-go, especially in the month of July when the war and genocide are commemorated.

Likewise, discussing issues of guilt and complicity with the Dutch veterans as 'someone from outside', was not helpful, and as such I refrained from doing so. Here, it was not nationality, but my general background and career that prevented me from asking certain questions or reacting to told stories in a more critical way. However, I do not think that this has harmed the results, as both the course of the events of 1995 and the Dutch complicity in general are not the topic of this research, but are rather circumstantial, albeit significant, information.

Lastly, I want to consider the use of the term trauma. In general, 'trauma' can refer to a psychosomatic condition, or can be used as a cultural concept that describes the condition of individuals and collectives who are impacted by something traumatizing. This second approach is often used within the field

2 For a more detailed description of the approach I took in this case, see the respective chapter.

of memory studies. There, trauma does not necessarily imply a psychosomatic condition, but can, for example, refer to the state of a society pertaining to a specific past, like the Dutch presence in Srebrenica. Although both uses are, in my opinion, defendable when applied in the right context, the ease with which the term 'trauma' is sometimes applied can be experienced as harmful by some people. For persons who suffer from PTSD or a related condition, this devaluation of 'trauma' can be difficult, as they might experience it as diminishing both their problems and the impact of the condition on their surroundings. Meanwhile, describing persons as 'traumatized' can also be experienced as stigmatizing and belittling. Inversely, for those people who suffer from the consequences of their deployment but do not tick all the boxes leading to a PTSD diagnosis, the lack of recognition of their 'trauma' can be harmful too, and has serious consequences on someone's right for medical treatment or allowances.

For these reasons, I have been hesitant to use the term 'trauma' throughout the interviewing processes and when writing up the results. During the interviews with the veterans, I never brought up the term, and only spoke about trauma when an interviewee used the term themselves. Although some of the veterans told me about their diagnoses, I did not ask the veterans whether they suffer(ed) from PTSD or not, to avoid creating the impression that I was only interested in their (potential) trauma and not in their other stories. Moreover, when writing the empirical chapters, I tried to stay away from using 'trauma' in its cultural definition, and only refer to it when it pertains to a medical condition, when used in this way by the interviewee.

Reflection on the position of the researcher

A hermeneutical project asks for a reflection on the position of the researcher and their prejudices. My personal background has impacted this research and the way it was conducted. First of all, my personal interests, academic 'style' and identity have all played a role in shaping and unfolding this project. As explained before, my academic background has influenced my approach to conducting research and the creation of knowledge. For example, it would have been unlikely that I, with my background, would have adopted a positivist approach. Likewise, my personal interests have impacted the project. Some of the themes and concepts discussed have had my attention before the start of this project, and might have colored my approach to for instance memory studies, historical experiences, or the study of place.

Meanwhile, I explored topics that were completely new to me too. As a researcher without much experience with studying military history, and without much familiarity with military culture—I grew up in quite a non-military family—I approached the topic in an open-minded manner. This is not necessarily bad: being unfamiliar with a topic allows a researcher to still see the peculiarities of a culture or specific behavior. Pretending to be naïve is even mentioned as an interviewing tactic by some (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Still, it is important to realize that both an informed and open-minded approach influence the way an interview is conducted and the kind of knowledge that is created.

Furthermore, it is impossible to ignore the position you have as an academic researcher. Interviewees might have assigned a certain status to me, and it is difficult to completely undo the power relation that is created between interviewer and interviewee (Bird, 2003). I particularly noticed this when interviewees started to speak about their lack of historical knowledge compared to mine or the difficulty of my questions—even though I assured them that there were no wrong answers possible. I for instance noticed that interviewees, especially the younger ones, sometimes seemed hesitant to come up with answers and instead just replied with 'I don't know'. When this happened, I usually changed the direction of the conversation and came back to the topic later on in different words, or started to talk more about my own experiences, which helped to regain trust.

Here, I would also like to elaborate on the issue of gender. My data sample knows an uneven distribution of gender identities, as the military personnel, veterans, and peace marchers were predominantly male, while the majority of the volunteers was female. While this reflects the general composition of these groups and professions, their gender inevitably has influenced the produced data. It is possible that a more gender diverse research group might have resulted in different outcomes. Although I actively tried to recruit more female interviewees, these attempts did not succeed, leaving me think that female (former) members of the military feel less inclined to talk to an academic interviewer. Obviously, war is a topic that is very much associated with masculinity and with 'manly' features like bravery, strength, and courage. This could have caused potential female interviewees to refrain from participation, as they might have felt that their experiences did not match the general narrative on warfare. Another explanation for the scarcity of female interviewees could be that they did not completely feel comfortable with my position as an outsider to the military.

Besides the gender distribution of the interviewees, my personal gender must also have influenced the results. The gender of the interviewer is both 'a resource and a limitation' to any research project (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009, p. 63). As such, my gender performance, as rooted in my personal biography, will have opened some doors for me but also closed some others. This seems

particularly relevant in the cases that focused on the groups of visitors that were associated with the military—as said, a very masculine environment. In terms of access, I assume my gender has helped me to get into contact with interviewees. My position as female outsider to the military could have caused interviewees to not regard me as harmful or too critical—thereby reflecting a traditional assignment of gender roles, in which women are seen as passive listeners whose task is to compose male narratives (p. 54). Additionally, being interviewed by a woman might encourage a male interviewee to talk about a topic he is not comfortable with in front of men (p. 54). Still, it is important to recognize that gender forms only one aspect of someone's identity. Human interactions, such as interviews, are embedded in complex social dynamics, in which gender plays a role, just like other expressions and performances of identity.

In conclusion, the aim of this dissertation is to provide insight in the motivations, experiences, and reflections of different groups of visitors to former war sites, by means of a qualitative approach that revolves around hermeneutical, phenomenological, and critical perspectives on conducting research and the creation of knowledge. In the next chapters, I turn to the empirical studies that this study is built upon.

CHAPTER 3

LESSONS OF WAR. The significance of battlefield tours for the Dutch military[1]

1 This chapter has been published as: S. Driessen, M. Grever & S. Reijnders (2019). Lessons of war: The significance of battlefield tours for the Dutch military. *Critical Military Studies* (published online August 2019) 1-19. DOI: 10.1080/23337486.2019.1651044. I slightly adjusted the text in order to stress the role of this study within the dissertation.

Introduction

"I stood on that bridge, and realized: this is the place where all could have turned out well…" With these words, a Dutch military officer summarized his memories of a military battlefield tour he undertook to the Belgian Ardennes as part of his education at a military academy. Even though the trip took place more than twenty years ago, the officers' memories of this trip were very vivid. With a group of cadets and teachers, they spent almost a week in the area, following the footsteps of the Kampfgruppe of Joachim Peiper, responsible for the murder of eighty-four American prisoners of war in the town of Malmedy (Remy, 2017).

Officers and cadets of the Dutch army regularly visit locations like the Ardennes, the beaches of Normandy or the forests in Germany, as part of the training and education program of the Dutch military. Through a confrontation with a tangible historical war landscape, the officers and cadets practice military tactics and discuss military decision-making. By studying the terrain, they hope to learn from past events and aim to enhance their tactical skills. Standing on the spot where it all happened thereby seems to evoke a specific place-bound experience, which can contain feelings of wonder and amazement, but also of awe and fear, of historical connection or distance, and more.

Military battlefield tours, i.e. the various types of military trips to historical war sites for educational purposes, have existed since at least the eighteenth century. The trips originate in the quest to find a useful way to teach inexperienced officers how to act in wartime (Haycock, 2005, p. 9). Halfway into the eighteenth century, the Prussian commander Frederick the Great became convinced that knowledge about former battles was beneficial for the development of tactical skills. In an attempt to professionalize his army, he encouraged his officers to study war history, undertook trips to battlefields, and invited war veterans to help him to understand what had happened on site (Hall, 2005, pp. 38–39). In these practices, he stimulated his officers to discuss their observations and tactical solutions, urging them to think for themselves under guidance of the war landscape (p. 39). This Prussian tradition provides the basis of the military battlefield tour as it is practiced nowadays in various European countries and North America (p. 44).

Currently, battlefield visits, staff rides and tactical exercises without troops (TEWTs) are part of the military training and education programs of different western armies. The precise form these trips to former war sites take differs per nation; where for example British and American military battlefield tours are said to focus more on commemoration, pilgrimage and heroism (Caddick-Adams,

2005; Kiesling, 2005), German staff rides seem to emphasize tactical analyses (Hall, 2005). The Dutch military battlefield tours contain elements of both traditions. As such, national preferences, traditions and military culture have an influence on the design of the battlefield tours. [2]

In this chapter, I use 'military battlefield tours' as a broad term to describe organized military educational travel to former war sites that range from classical 'follow the guide' battlefield tours and staff rides to more interactive tactical exercises without troops. [3]

In the Dutch context, the military battlefield tours usually contain multiple components—for example starting with a history class, followed by a TEWT and concluding with a visit to a war memorial. A specific feature of the Dutch military battlefield tours is the 'historically themed TEWT', where officers use modern means to solve tactical dilemmas from the past. In general, the Dutch military battlefield tours have a diverse character that can be adjusted to the wishes and needs of a military unit or class. Because the military battlefield tours predominantly are an obligatory part of higher military education in the Netherlands, or are professionally practiced by military units, the link with war tourism appears to be weak. Yet, as will be illustrated throughout this chapter, in practice, some of the characteristics can be discerned in war tourism too, such as in the 'authenticity' and 'credibility' ascribed to the visited battlefields, the establishment of an emotional connection with the sites, or the value of bearing witness to past events. Moreover, I would like to argue that the hesitations to frame the phenomenon of military battlefield tours as touristic practices provide an interesting starting point for exploring contemporary war tourism and the narratives that surround the practice.

As discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, tourist travel to former war sites has gained quite some academic attention the last years. Still, less is known about professional visitors of these sites, like the military. Only a limited amount of research has been done about military field trips to

2 There seems to be a link between the form of the military battlefield tour and different national cultures of remembrance with regard to their military past—a topic to explore more in depth in another project.

3 The terms used by the Dutch army and Military Academy to describe the practices differ, and vary between 'battlefield tour', 'military historical analysis' and 'TEWTs on historical sites.' 'Staff ride'—a term frequently used in the British and American context, is not a term that is used by the Dutch military and focuses on military staff only. I have decided to use the term 'military battlefield tours' as an umbrella term for the different types of military travel to and education on historical war sites. 'Tours' is a well-known term that speaks to different audiences—both military and civilian. Moreover, 'tours' allows to emphasize the touristic features of the trips as well as the organized character of the visits, rather than as independent or individual visits.

former war sites (Lloyd, 2009, p. 177; Woodward, 2014, p. 48). Many of these studies have been conducted within the field of military history or by military professionals, often presenting a top-down view on the benefits of battlefield tours for the military (e.g., Due et al, 2015; Hall, 2005; Melvin, 2019; Robertson, 1987). Still, other authors criticize the assumed learning benefits and the 'unique experiences' that military battlefield tours are often said to offer (Kiesling, 2005; King, 2019; Lloyd, 2009). These authors stress the uncritical attitude within different national armies towards the advantages of military battlefield tours. Where Lloyd (2009, p. 178, 182) questions the added value of experiential learning for the military and pleads for a more interactive approach to educating the military on site, King (2019, p. 21) locates the benefits of military battlefield tours in social cohesion and moral growth rather than in the development of cognitive skills.

Despite these (plausible) points of critique to the design and function of the military battlefield tours, little is known about the point of view of those who are actually participating in the battlefield tours: the military personnel. Only Bechtold's study (2005) includes some remarks of Canadian (military and non-military) students who joined a battlefield tour to Normandy. In this chapter, I address this empirical lacuna.

My analysis focuses on the personal experiences of Dutch army members during military battlefield tours organized by the Dutch army and the Netherlands Defence Academy. I will present a qualitative analysis of the personal experiences of the Dutch military during their battlefield tours. When speaking about 'personal experiences', I take into account that those experiences are never entirely personal, but are always part of collective cultural practices (Erll, 2008, p. 5). Although I have also examined the goals and the organization of the military field trips, a bottom-up perspective is central to this chapter. In doing so, I will address experiences, values, limits and tensions that are present while working with (tangible) history.

The research question is: how do Dutch officers and cadets experience the military battlefield tours, which possible tensions can be observed between the goals of the trips and the experiences of the individual participants, and what are the possible consequences for an engagement with violent pasts? I start with discussing theories about historical re-enactment and bodily understandings of the past. Here, I propose a theoretical approach in which I explore the usefulness of re-enactment theory for understanding the motives and experiences of military personnel studying and practicing on former war sites. Then, I will explain the used methods. Next, I will present the findings in three themes that arose from the analysis of the data. In the last part I present the conclusions.

Historical re-enactment and bodily understanding

The military battlefield tours are undertaken to study and reflect on past events on site in order to improve officers' and cadets' performances in future wars. These improvements range from plain tactical decision-making to an emotional understanding of what it means to be in the military. Consequently, the tours make use of multiple ways of approaching the past, sometimes focusing on cognitive understanding of the past and sometimes on obtaining emotional responses.

The process of reflecting on past events on site is related to what the British philosopher, historian and archaeologist Robin Collingwood has coined as the re-enactment of past thought: the *rational* rethinking of specific decisions of actors in the past in order to explain their actions and behavior. This definition of re-enactment differs from the more popular understanding of re-enactment as a form of living history performed by history enthusiasts.[4] Collingwood's re-enactment of past thought is a cognitive procedure, it is not about 're-feeling' an emotion or 're-experiencing' an experience (Collingwood, 1993, p. 290, 294; Grever, 2012; Retz, 2017). Collingwood emphasizes the possibility of re-enacting the logical structure of past thought: "the historian is enabled, indeed not to 'know' the past as it actually happened (…) but to solve with accuracy and certainty the particular historical problems which present themselves to his mind, in terms of the evidence at his disposal" (Collingwood ,1993, p. 427). With regard to evidence Collingwood makes a distinction between material remnants and past events. Material remnants have both a 'real' and 'imaginative' dimension in the sense that one can observe, for instance, a bunker from the First World War in the present, but can imaginatively re-think its construction in the past as well. As an event of the past the latter is not 'real', because we cannot observe it in the present: it is only the *thought* as expressed in the event of the action that can be re-enacted in the present (Collingwood, 1993, pp. 439–440; Van der Dussen 1993, 47).

Collingwood points to what relics, written documents or other traces of evidence reveal about the past. The historical method then requires the application of the logic of question and answer to past events to solve historical problems, a kind of inner dialogue. His focus on evidence and rational explanations would mean ignoring the impact of emotions such as excitement, eagerness,

4 In scientific research, Collingwood is often mentioned in this context of popular re-enactments, yet, as to argue, his form of re-enactment has little to do with the popular approach to re-enactment. See for example Landsberg (2015).

fear, pain or trauma. Yet, in his manuscript *The Principles of History* Collingwood acknowledges that the history of thought also "includes the history of emotions so far as these emotions are essentially related to the thoughts in question" (Collingwood, 1999, p. 77).[5] Emotions and irrational thoughts are both involved in the actions of historical agents and can and should thus be understood by the historian. But emotions are only considered when there is proof of them and when they have a bearing on the actions being studied. But that does not mean that Collingwood excludes all cultural aspects from the historical field, as some have argued (Megill, 2007, pp. 53–55).

Two extensions of Collingwood's philosophy relevant to this case reflect a contemporary approach to affective experiences of traces of the past (e.g., Malpas 1999, 180–181). First, while Collingwood recognizes the influence of emotions and irrational thoughts on historical decision making, and the possibility to re-think those historical decisions in case the emotions left any traces, he pays less attention to the fact that the act of re-thinking past thoughts also involves the emotions of the interpreter (Grever, 2012, p. 82). Think for example of an attempt to re-think the past thoughts of a battle commander that resulted in a war crime—like the thoughts of the earlier mentioned Joachim Peiper. For some persons, re-thinking his thoughts might arouse an emotional response that influences the interpretation of the cause of events. Also, previous experiences, in particular trauma, can have a long-lasting effect on someone's personality and his or her capacity to verbalize certain thoughts and feelings adequately. Recognizing the potential affective response of an interpreter is therefore necessary when working with historical interpretation.

Second, knowledge is not exclusive to the mind—it can also exist on other levels (Crouch et al, 2001). For Collingwood, the re-enactment of past thought is primarily a cognitive procedure (Collingwood, 1993, p. 287). However, insights from a rather different philosophical tradition tell us that such a separation of thoughts from the body, and consequently from its surroundings, is not possible. The phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty regards the body as the center of orientation in the world. As he writes: 'rather than a mind *and* a body, man is a mind *with* a body, a being who can only get to the truth of things because its body is, as it were, embedded in those things' (Merleau-Ponty, [1948] 2004, p. 56). Therefore, knowledge is produced by mind and body, while being informed by movements, bodily actions and sensual experiences that are performed in a place (Casey, 1997, pp. 232–234). For Merleau-Ponty, such a place is not a

5 See also M. Hughes-Warrington. (2008). Fifty key thinkers on history. London: Routledge. Many thanks to Jan van der Dussen for this valuable information on Collingwood.

neutral given, but something that is created and performed through the body (Casey, 1997, p. 234). Hence, when analyzing the process of interpreting past events, it is important to acknowledge the existence of different levels of (subjective) knowledge: cognitive, bodily, emotional.

These two extensions—emotional and bodily—point to an approach to historical re-enactment that is quite different from Collingwood's original ideas, as the contrast between the cognitive procedure of the re-enactment of past thought and subjective, emotional interpretations of the past seems strong—or at least in theory. In practice, the two appear to be much more connected. It is not difficult to imagine, for example, how an affective response to a narrative about the past stimulates someone's interest in history and perhaps also encourages critical reflection on the past (Landsberg, 2015, p. 2). With this in mind, it becomes easier to regard the current Dutch military battlefield tours as an approach to engaging with the past in which the two modes coexist—even though it also clear that this coexistence should be regarded as complex, and possibly problematic. Therefore, in order to know how the members of the military themselves comprehend and experience their battlefield tours in practice, I will now present the outcomes of the empirical research.

Methodology

As a qualitative study, the research is based on a series of interviews with Dutch officers of different ranks and ages, cadets at the Royal Military Academy and their professors and battlefield guides. The Dutch context has been chosen because of the variety of forms in which the military battlefield tours exist in the Netherlands as well as for reasons of access. Eleven Dutch officers and cadets participated in a semi-structured interview in the Netherlands from November 2015 until November 2016. As such, the sample is diverse, ranging from young adults to experienced officers. Semi-structured interviewing allows for a focus on the interviewee's perspectives, experiences and worldviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2007, p. 27). The semi-structured interviews were based on an interview guide that contained questions about the motivation of the officers and cadets to undertake the military battlefield tours, their on-site experiences, and the significance that they attach to the visits. Next, data has been gathered in four open interviews with military instructors who were involved in the battlefield tours—teachers, experts and guides working for the Dutch defense department. Because these interviews mainly took place during the fieldwork these interviews have not been recorded. Instead, extensive notes have been taken. Although this contests my proposed bottom-up approach, their information was relevant for the preparation of the interviews with the (non-commissioned) officers and cadets and gave me insight in the goals and practices of the battlefield tours. As such, their information was used to write the contextual parts of the analysis.

Participant observation has been conducted during three military battlefield tours, each lasting 5 days: a historically themed TEWT to the Reichswald in Germany with officers of an armored infantry brigade[6], a battlefield tour to the surroundings of Ypres, Belgium, with a group of non-commissioned officers studying to become officers, and a historically themed TEWT to the surroundings of Rotterdam with a group of officers of the Dutch airmobile brigade. The sampling of interviewees happened during those trips. The cadets were recruited during a class devoted to the preparation of their battlefield tour to Normandy and interviewed after their return. All interviewees have consented to participate in this study, to be recorded, and all were offered anonymity if they wished so. The interviews were conducted face-to-face at various military compounds in the Netherlands, at the Netherlands Defence Academy, or, in one case, at the home of the interviewee, with an average duration of a little over one hour. All interviews have been transcribed verbatim and were thematically coded with an open-coding strategy. The codes generated in the open coding were grouped under larger concepts and themes. These different themes form the basis of the analysis. As the interviews were conducted in Dutch, the native tongue of all participants, I have translated the used quotes.

Finally, it is important to mention the existence of a military culture, a culture in which there is little space for individual consideration. Becoming an officer implies a radical choice for living a military life spent on military compounds, under the continuous risk of being sent somewhere for a long time without having much to say about the character, goal and mandate of a mission. An officers' life is, especially during the training and educational period, a life spent in military surroundings, eating, studying and sleeping together with other cadets, with only the possibility of going home at the weekend. This way of living together provides the basis of the establishment of a military culture, a culture of shared values and a strong sense of companionship based on traditions from the past (Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006). It also establishes a strict border between the civilian and the military world, in which the experience of 'being

6 All field trips took a week; I joined the trips to the Reichswald, Ypres and Rotterdam for a day. The descriptions of the types of battlefield tour relate to the program of the day that I joined. During their time Reichswald, for example, the officers did more than a TEWT only, but also engaged in commemorations, war games and historical classes.

in the military' is considered difficult to explain to anyone who lacks this experience. During the interviews, the existence of a military culture was noticeable. Officers and cadets for example used the same words and expressions to describe their ideas, especially when talking about ethical or moral issues (e.g., Jansen & Kramer, 2018). This might sometimes have obscured individual voices. However, one could reason that this learned way of thinking also constitutes the life-world of the interviewees. In-depth interviewing, with its focus on individual experience and meaning making enables a researcher to explore this military culture and expose the boundaries and tensions between individual and learned ways of meaning making.

Analysis

In the next sections, I present the results of the analysis. The analysis is divided into three themes. 'Re-enacting the past together' focuses on the officers' and instructors' motives to undertake battlefield tours and the employed historical method. 'Engaging with an authentic past' discusses the experience and significance the participants attach to visiting tangible historical war sites, memorials and war cemeteries. 'Working with different perspectives' considers the tensions present within the military battlefield tours. In doing so, I move from more general comments on the form and goals of the field trips and the used methods in the first section to more personal experiences and effects of the field trips in the second and third section.

Re-enacting the past together

Within the current Dutch army and military academy, the military battlefield tour is practiced in different forms. From more standardized guided tours along former battlefields that focus on analyzing the past to tactical exercises without troops (TEWT's) on historical grounds, where former battles are mentally re-enacted with modern means. During a military battlefield tour, which can take up to a week, these different forms can all be employed and adjusted to the learning goals of a unit or class. Both stand-by army units and cadets engage in these activities, due to which members of the military participate in battlefield tours during different periods of their career in the army, ranging from once a year to multiple times a year. In the case of the army units, the incentive to organize a battlefield tour comes from the army commanders themselves, while for the cadet's battlefield tours are a standard part of their curriculum.

According to the interviewed instructors, the trips are undertaken for several reasons. First, to learn practical military skills, like giving orders in chaotic circumstances, developing a sense for terrain and learning to read the landscape in a military way. Here, a reference to a historical situation is regarded as a way to appoint similarities between the past and the present. Second, to develop insight in the difficulties of understanding and interpreting the event discussed. The confrontation with a historical situation is thereby seen as a way to teach the participants to deal with complex situations, to work with friction, and to think 'out of the box'.[7] Third, the instructors regard the trips as a natural way to stimulate reflection on the military profession as a whole, because discussing a historical situation allows to touch upon all facets of the job—from the practice of navigating in a forest to ethical questions about killing and dying. In the case of the cadets, an extra goal is mentioned: that of developing personality, for example by encouraging them to form opinions on issues like military responsibility and leadership. The teachers and guides agree that their personal preferences also steer the perspective taken during a military battlefield tour. For example, one guide mentions to be prone to discussing facts and debunking historical myths, while another prefers to focus on appealing stories during his battlefield tours.

Karel, one of my interviewees and lieutenant colonel of the airmobile brigade, and ten of his colleagues went on a TEWT in the surroundings of Rotterdam that was devoted to studying attacks and defenses of bridges in the Second World War in order to improve their tactical skills. Karel describes how he works with history during such an exercise:

> *Now, in this specific case, you are standing on a bridge that you want to conquer with modern means. It is not possible to compare that with [how they did it] then. But still, when you're standing there, you discover that many things are in fact the same. And you will question yourself, why are we doing things in such a difficult way nowadays, they did it much more simple back then, or faster. (…) And you test, is it testing? It is comparing, it is searching for, eh, what do we take from what they did back then. And sometimes those are real discoveries, that will make you think, shit, it's not always the planning, it's also showing initiative in the execution. And*

7 The term 'friction' stems from Von Clausewitz's classic On War (1832) and is nowadays still used in military jargon, and refers to the countless uncertainties and unexpected consequences of practical warfare.

sometimes it's more like, why did they do such stupid things, what was the cause of that, and why? Well, it's good to see those two [present and past situation] next to each other.
—Karel, 54

As Karel explains, during the exercise he moves between past and present, searching for similarities and differences. Hereby, he uses his knowledge of a past event as a means to gauge tactical plans made in the present. His judging of past events from a present point of view echoes Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine, where insight in past actions or events is also established through an inner dialogue between past and present. However, for Karel, there is something more that makes the exercise beneficial to him: the possibility to speak openly with colleagues about all levels of an operation. For Karel, the discussion about the past does not end with himself questioning the past. Rather, the past is used as a vehicle to debate tactical issues with colleagues in detail. Interestingly enough, the re-enactment of past thought happens here in a dialogical manner with others. Albert, a 35-year-old infantry captain, sees these debates with his officer colleagues during a TEWT as crucial for the execution of his profession:

For me, a TEWT is super important, because I can hear my direct battalion commander think. I hear him say "hey, I think this." (…) During big exercises or on a mission I only have radio contact with him, and only very briefly. So it's very important that we know of each other how we react to specific situations.
—Albert, 35

Here, Albert tells how joining a tactical exercise without troops helps him to get to know the ways of thinking of his commander, and predict his behavior in future situations. Witnessing his commander reasoning and reacting to tactical questions thereby assists in creating intuitive knowledge of what he will be doing next.

Albert and Karel both hold a positive opinion about the benefits of the military battlefield tours, and are able to relate the historical information to their own position as officers. But is this also the case with younger and lower-ranked military? Although all interviewees speak about the benefits of historical knowledge for the military in general, not all of them see the direct connection between the lessons taught at the military battlefield tours and their own practices. Sometimes this is caused by the kind of job that the interviewee is working in. One army medic, for example, mentions that it is not very interesting for her to learn about the choices of former infantry officers. The same goes for an army engineer, who

had looked forward to discussing the fabrication of the tunnels and bombs in Ypres, and was disappointed that the trip's main focus lay with tactics. At other times, the rank of the officer was an important factor. In general, the higher the rank of the officer, the more the military battlefield tours are valued in terms of applicable learning benefits, and the more knowledge of the past is seen as useful in their practices. This particularly applies to knowledge obtained from historically themed TEWTs that predominantly focus on the tactical decisions of past, high-ranked officers. Thus, the match of the content of a military battlefield tour with a participant's rank and specialization determines the appeal it holds for those participants: the more the historical example could be related to someone's specialization or field of interest, the more the trips were valued.

Concluding, historical re-enactment, as practiced by the Dutch military on former war sites, has some clear benefits. By using the past both as a reference to a real situation and as vehicle to discuss tactical ideas with during a TEWT, officers are able to spend time discussing their ideas in detail and develop an understanding for the course of events in the past or in the future. To a certain degree, this way of working with the past resonates Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine: the way of thinking of former military is central to the exercises and the past is approached in a self-conscious, reflective manner. Yet, the benefits of military battlefield tours are as much defined by the urge to listen to another colleagues' reasoning. The past situation here functions as a vehicle that helps to evoke ideas and stimulate a detailed discussion about various levels of warfare. Additionally, the re-enactment does not work for everyone in the same way—the value ascribed to the military battlefield tours is depending on the rank and type of job of the participants. At the moment the historical example mirrors the personal situation of a cadet or officer, it is considered significant to study the past.

Engaging with an 'authentic' past

The battlefield tours conducted by the Dutch military are according to the interviewed instructors based on the conviction that a historical site with an authentic appeal is a good way to instruct cadets and officers about war history and tactics, second only to participating in a real war (see also King, 2019, p. 18). What does the presence of traces to the past contribute to the experience of the cadets and the officers? The interviews indicate that for some officers, an unfamiliar landscape already awakens their historical imagination, while for others much more physical historical traces are necessary in order to have the past speak to them. Yet, all interviewees agree that a visit to a specific historical site

provides something extra to a story. Particularly the cadets stress the necessity of the presence of distinctive historical traces in order to imagine past events and see the visits as beneficial for their personal development. Most of the officers have less difficulty in imagining the past. One of the reasons for this difference is the amount of knowledge and experiences officers have acquired throughout their career in the army: with a lot of knowledge about the past, it is easier to imagine it. Although the visual aides on a site help to evoke a certain image of the past—actually resulting in performing a specific past—the way the past is imagined is dependent on more than just visuals, and consequently differs from person to person (Crouch, 2003; Daugbjerg, 2011, p. 23). Thus, though visiting a historical site adds an extra layer to a story about a past conflict, these layers are colored by personal backgrounds.

Another explanation for the difference between cadets and officers is earlier experience in real wars and the subsequent sense of responsibility. For Albert, for example, being on a tangible site where real events happened during a TEWT serves as an incentive to perform. This incentive is connected to a sense of responsibility for his unit:

> *What is equally important is that you are confronted with reality. Like, "Okay, what I decide will cause real losses, it will really cause casualties." This makes it very serious, and makes you realize that the things you decide need to be really clever. It allows you to consider that, you know, real people stood here in the woods, and they were really bombed with all this artillery, so it's very important that I include covering fire in my plans, and maybe it makes me realize that we haven't practiced covering fire in a while, so it also works as an incentive to train specific military skills.*
> *—Albert, 35*

Next to the confrontation with reality, a military battlefield tour also provides a confrontation with the views of others. Mayke, a 32-year-old lieutenant, describes this process clearly:

> *Yes, I think that if something has really happened, it is easier to empathize with. Now you know the outcome of the events, and what ultimately happened (…) but go stand in the shoes of someone then (…) it will make you look more in depth at the reasons why he made a wrong decision, or why he chose to do it in that way, while in our opinion that would have been the least preferable solution.*
> *—Mayke, 32*

According to Mayke, focusing on a historical situation helps to get a more nuanced view on the actions and choices of the military in the past and causes them to become less judgmental. Sven, a 24-year-old cadet, experienced a similar call for nuance. When talking about the battlefield tour he undertook with his fellow cadets to Normandy, he mentions that a visit to a war site caused him to think in less black-and-white terms about a historical event, and that it made it easier for him to engage and empathize with the situation. Later on, Sven brings up the issue of credibility. You can read about a historical event, but the story always stays somewhat abstract. Standing on the spot where past events occurred allowed him to realize the scale of what happened and believe the consequences of past actions:

> *At a certain moment we were in the bocage, those large hedges, and of course you see those in every documentary, but now you see them for real and that makes you realize that they are different than expected. (…) I know they had problems with it, but I didn't see to what extent. And now you're standing there, and you see such a hedge of four meters high, and you think "okay, yes, that might indeed cause problems."*
> *—Sven, 24*

Meanwhile, visits to historical sites during a military battlefield tour can confirm prior knowledge instead of nuancing it. Mayke tells how she liked that visiting a war cemetery in Ypres during a battlefield tour verified the things she read in books about this site:

> *Because you have spent so much time [on an assignment], you will recognize things, and it will make you think: "hey, there is this and this, this is that stone, and what the English have written on it and the thoughts behind that." And you will think, "Ok, now that I am standing here, I know that the books were correct in their description of this," and that is a nice thing, yes.*
> *—Mayke, 32*

Both Mayke and Sven underline the importance of seeing things with their own eyes. By relating their experiences on site to their prior knowledge, they are able to understand the complexities of the past situation, a form of historical thinking desired by the instructors. Seeing the real terrain and obstacles that earlier armies had to face thereby helps them to engage with the historical situation, and allows them to recognize elements of friction. At the same time, it is also clear that the presence of familiar elements on site provides a certain satisfaction: by

visiting a historical site, and recognizing facts and stories that were read about in books, these facts and stories become more credible. Here, one should keep in mind that historical sites not necessarily evoke a more convincing image of past events (Muir, 2001, p. xii). Moreover, both the design of a historical site and in decisions to maintain or preserve certain places always reflect a particular interpretation of past events.

The various quotes of the interviewees illustrate that in this process of witnessing what happens on a historical site, prior knowledge can be nuanced, confirmed or enriched with details. In all these cases, the experience of standing on the spot is a positive experience that adds value to the personal understanding of a historical event (Gough, 2004, p. 238). However, not everybody sees the benefits. Mike explains this very clearly:

> *It is nice to see the things in reality, but overall, I don't think the trip was a success. With all the means that we have nowadays, I don't see the benefits of traveling all the way to Normandy. But this is of course also because of my personal interest. When I see a beach, it's just a beach. For me there is no difference between Scheveningen [a well-known Dutch beach] or Omaha. (…) But then such a cemetery, that I find really beautiful to see, because there a specific atmosphere is present that you can taste.*
> *—Mike, 21*

Indeed, visits to war cemeteries and memorials are a common part of the Dutch military battlefield tours for both cadets and (non-commissioned) officers, and offer a confrontation with the possible consequences of warfare. Sometimes the visits to cemeteries and memorials are accompanied by a military ceremony, and, in the case of the battlefield tour to Ypres, by attending the Last Post memorial service at the Menin Gate in military formation. According to the instructors, even though killing and dying seem to be central to the military profession, they are not often talked about within the army. A visit to a war cemetery is therefore thought to create space for these topics to be discussed, and serves as a moment for reflection on the profession. Many of the officers speak about these kinds of visits as a natural activity, something that is an obvious part of being in the military. As Karel explains:

> *Go to Normandy, and go stand on the water line at the time of the attack and look at the dunes. Then you realize what kind of drama it must have been to get from the beach to the dunes, and what that might have meant. Then automatically the feeling will emerge that you want to pay respect to that. It is our job, we are working on it every day, so you automatically feel connected to the people that did these kind of things [in the past].*
> *—Karel, 54*

Karel tells how visits to historical war sites automatically establish a feeling of connection to past military, and stimulate him to commemorate those persons. A part of this stimulation is also caused by a sense of duty. In the next quote, Karel tells more about the origins of this sense of duty. By coming up with words like 'polite' and 'respect', it is noticeable that this duty is partly caused by his ideas of what is expected from an army member, and partly by his feeling of connection to military of the past:

> *If you do a TEWT in Normandy, then it is also polite to take a moment there, you know, because those military cemeteries are all over, to take a moment to contemplate. That is also a bit of respect towards those people, you see, we continuously have to be conscious about what we do, an army member has to realize that when he is sent somewhere, he might as well not return, and that is something that you need to realize all the time, and considering that it is not bad at all to take a moment [to pay respect].*
> *—Karel, 54*

Where for general visitors to war cemeteries, paying respect or fulfilling a duty is something rather abstract, something that is (mostly) far away from daily life, this is not the case for the military. Karel's remark indicates how a visit to a war cemetery for him functions as a confrontation with the concrete possibility of not returning from a war. His sense of duty might therefore also involve something else: the desire that other members of the military will do the same for him in case he dies in war. Interestingly, for Karel the development of insight in the course of past events during a TEWT goes hand in hand with the emotional connection to that event, caused by the identification with army members of the past. Here I notice the impact of what I have called a military culture. Like Karel, many other interviewees mention both the connection to military of the past and the confrontation with their own possible fate as thoughts and feelings that arise during their visits to war cemeteries. For Daan, a 23-year-old lieutenant, these thoughts and feelings also stimulate him to work hard. As he tells:

> *You think about the fact that this is someone like me, this is someone who maybe had the same ideals and joined [the army] for similar reasons, who*

followed a similar education, and yes this guy died in this way, and lies here between I don't know how many men… (…) So I think, this can happen to me too, and now with the upcoming mission, it makes me really conscious to do everything to prepare in the best way possible and train every moment I can.
—Daan, 23

Daan describes how a visit to a war cemetery makes him aware of the existence of similarities between a dead soldier's life and his own life. Again, it is a personal connection to the past, a recognition of similarities, which makes the past speak to the officers. Albert tells how he too looked for a personal connection with the men buried at a war cemetery:

In my case, I was just looking around a bit there, checking out how many graves of officers I could see, and thought by myself: "So, still quite a few." (...) I can sit here nicely behind my desk, but eh, officers die too.
—Albert, 35

By starting his story with the words 'in my case', Albert indicates that a visit to a war cemetery is a personal affair, something that you do in your own way and on your own conditions. Interestingly, this individual approach to commemorating contrasts with the collective and homogenizing character of the military culture. With regard to the education of cadets, Jansen and Kramer (2018) too mention this contrast: on the one hand, cadets are expected to adjust to existing hierarchies and cultures, while on the other hand they are encouraged to develop personality as future military leaders (pp. 11–12). With regard to the military battlefield tours, it seems to be that adjustment and obedience are expected when working on tactical decision making, while visits to cemeteries and memorials are seen as possibilities to develop individual points of view, both for the cadets and the (non-commissioned) officers.

Visits to cemeteries also allow for the development of personal rituals. Richard explains how he has established such a personal ritual, starting again with appointing that such a ritual is something you think up for yourself:

I find it important that when I'm at a military cemetery, I have walked past every grave. That might sound a bit weird, but (…) I find it important, and preferably I want to read all the names, and, you know, how has this guy died, and think fuck, you were only 17, you haven't even had a beer.
—Richard, 43

Richard has turned the sense of having to fulfil a duty into a personal ritual, into a way of behaving that he can repeat every time he visits a war cemetery. Thus, he translates the expected sense of duty into a personalized performance that is based on earlier experiences. Daan also speaks about the ritual of paying attention to every gravestone. Only, for him, the performance of such a ritual leans more towards performing expected behaviors:

Only, I have seen so many [war cemeteries] already, I don't spend hours there walking around, I don't need to see each name on a stone. I just want to take a look, get a sense of the atmosphere, and that is a kind of, eh, contemplative moment, and yes then you get into the car and leave again.
—Daan, 23

Instead of reading names on graves, Daan's personal ritual focuses on the atmosphere present at a war cemetery—on getting a sense for the greater narrative presented at the site. Daan explicitly describes the atmosphere on a cemetery as something that is different from other places, and something that invites him to spend a moment contemplating, before continuing with the rest of the day. Daan's remark also refers to the fact that compared to the more indistinct historical sites that are visited for tactical purposes, war cemeteries and memorials are designed sites, where a clear distinction is made between an inside world, secluded by walls and gates, and the outside world. It is therefore also the atmosphere that is created through this distinction that invites for developing and performing specific ritualistic behaviour, in which contemplation and self-reflection form an important part.

Paul Connerton has argued that people often need a spatial component in order to deal with the temporal changes that happen in life (Connerton, 2009, p. 14). Secluded spaces, like for example cemeteries, with their particular atmosphere, ask for contemplation. Being in such a place can help to understand the changes that happened in the life of the visitor and allows to reflect on the life that lies outside. It is also clear that the kind of place matters: historical sites that are distinctively different from daily life, like a cemetery, have a stronger appeal for self-reflection than sites that seem to be more integrated in common landscapes and life rhythms.

In sum, for many of the interviewees visits to historical war sites during military battlefield tours evoke feelings of connection, of nuancing and understanding the historical situation and the ones who acted in it. Being physically confronted with the reality of war contributes to the credibility of an event, even though it can be debated whether historical sites or traces ever represent a

'reality of war'. The visits to war cemeteries serve as a way to establish a feeling of connection to the military of the past and function as a literal confrontation with the fact that not everyone returns from a war. The connection that many interviewees feel to former army members also causes them to reflect on themselves and their profession. However, not everyone leaves a former war site while feeling enriched or connected to the past.

Working with different perspectives

I will now address various tensions mentioned during the interviews - cases in which the goals of the military battlefield tours do not match the experiences of the participants and seem to be more problematic. The larger part of these tensions is directed to the limitations in identifying with different historical actors or perspectives and the limits in understanding the past.

Where almost all (male) interviewees speak about the connection they feel to army members of the past, and positively evaluated their visits to war cemeteries, this is different for Mayke. During the battlefield tour to Ypres, her group of non-commissioned officers concluded the day by participating in the Last Post memorial ceremony in uniform. She emphasizes the individual character of the ceremony, and the lack of connection she feels to the bigger story:

> *To me, [joining the Last Post ceremony in uniform] was not really necessary. I understand why they did it (…) and you stand there differently at the moment when you are wearing a uniform, and you are then of course also part of the attraction [laughs]. (…) You know, everyone stands there with their own [thoughts], that's what I also mentioned in my assignment, that actually with every commemoration and the two minutes of silence, everyone thinks about their own personal world, not about the greater story. In those two minutes you will go back to the ones you have liked and the ones you have lost, rather than that you think about the Dutch or the Germans. That is what I witness at those commemorations.*
> *—Mayke, 32*

Interestingly, the absence of a connection to the greater story, as experienced by Mayke, might also be caused by the non-existence of a collective narrative in the Netherlands about the First World War—as a neutral nation, the Dutch do not have popular, widely shared narratives about that war. Yet, where the male participants of that particular battlefield tour to Ypres seemed to be able to relate to a general (masculine) narrative about the military experience of war, Mayke did not. Here, differences in gender and nationality seem to play a role in the way these ceremonies are experienced and valued.

During the interviews, it appeared that the kind of perspective the trip focused on also played a role in the evaluation of the trip. In Dutch military battlefield tours, the Second World War is the main topic for many of the trips, because of the proximity of the historical sites and the presence of a collective memory about many of the events. Yet, among the cadets the idea prevails that battles are often only discussed from an Allied point of view, following for example the advance of the allied troops through Normandy, and leaving out other perspectives. As Klaas, a 21-year-old cadet, tells:

> *We have been discussing military thinkers, and there are some German things that were really, also that there were people that were super good and that were ahead of others, and then I think, we speak about German thinkers, but we rarely discuss a battle from the German perspective, it's always the Allied perspective and they briefly mention 'this was the German defense' but it's not like, this is what the Germans did and then a brief discussion of the Americans. Why can't we discuss the start of the Second World War, when the German's were winning? Why were they that good? They might have been fighting for a wrong goal, that's how we see it now, but that doesn't mean that they weren't good military. Why can't we look at that, we might learn something from it.*
> *—Klaas, 21*

Contrary to the focus on the Allied forces when studying military movements, both the German and Allied war cemeteries in Normandy were visited during the battlefield tour of the cadets, and discussions on the issue of why and how to commemorate the Nazi-German military took place. However, according to the cadets, the reluctance to discuss Nazi-German military operations was present. The interviewed officers do not experience such restraints in discussing the controversial, Nazi-German, perspective—instead, they have a positive opinion towards working with different historical perspectives. Yet, they mention other limitations, for instance, when studying and working with situations that surpass plain tactical dilemmas. Richard, a 43-year-old major, explains how he found it difficult to mentally re-enact a controversial situation and connect it to his own practice, because he had never experienced similar circumstances:

That question, you know, 'what would you have done', is really difficult to

answer. Because if I would have been a member of Kampfgruppe Peiper and I would have been in the Ardennes in winter, without fuel, little sleep, and my unit had been decimated and I had to start walking back, I don't know how I would have reacted. (…) So I find it difficult to empathize with such a situation (…) from a humanitarian perspective you of course always say 'no! I would never do that', but you know, look at Iraq, Afghanistan, at what the Americans sometimes do (…) so I find it a difficult question to answer. From a tactical perspective I immediately know the answer, like I would have done this and this, but if you start looking from a human perspective, then it's almost impossible to know what you would have done. —Richard, 43

Richard makes a distinction between looking at the actions of the Germans from a tactical point of view and a humanitarian point of view. The tactical point of view here relates to a rational way of thinking and decision-making that came into existence within a specific mandate. The humanitarian point of view is connected to his knowledge that people do not always take rational decisions in war. This is further complicated by the fact that as an active member of the military, it is hard to admit that you expect to be susceptible to irrational or emotional decision-making. This is a paradox that might not be solved by a rational re-enactment of the past.

Richard's remark illustrates the complex position identification has when taking the perspective of the enemy and moving away from plain tactical dilemmas. On the one hand, identification is necessary in order to relate past events to present and personal practices, and potentially establish an emotional connection to the past. It serves as a means to enlarge someone's understanding of the past and knowledge of underlying factors that play a role when choosing sides. It also functions as a warning for the fact that everyone is susceptible to (perceived) wrong ideas. On the other hand, when confronted with perspectives that are difficult to agree on, a strict distinction between understanding plain tactical decisions and ideology inspired behavior is required. Here, the limits of Collingwood's re-enactment theory are exposed. A rational questioning of past events can help in understanding tactical decisions, but does not always suffice in understanding someone's behavior in war.

As stated in the earlier sections of the analysis, the establishment of a personal connection to the studied event is an important tool to bring the past to life for the participants and emphasize the usefulness of studying the past. However, not everyone experiences the establishment of such a connection. Sometimes, studying war history brings up feelings of distance, of the impossibility

of completely grasping the past ever. This is especially the case when speaking about a certain mentality or about controversial actions. Yet, the urge to understand such a mentality is mentioned by the interviewees—as is the desire to study historical events from unconventional perspectives. Furthermore, when studying unethical or ideologically driven actions, the practice of using different perspectives demonstrates its limits as it is difficult to identify with the actions that led to violent and controversial events.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on experiences of Dutch officers and cadets who participate in military battlefield tours. My findings suggest that the battlefield tours help them to evoke a specific place-bound engagement with the past. The multiple visual and sensual triggers on a historical site allow for gaining cognitive and bodily knowledge. Tactical discussions on historical war sites stimulate the development of tactical insights and enlarge the participant's historical knowledge. Both are cognitive; they are about (historical) facts and rational reasoning. Yet, whereas Collingwood's re-enactment of past thought in the mind of the historian is an inner dialogue of asking questions, in the case of the battlefield tours the re-enactment of past thought by military participants happened in a dialogical manner with others. Hereby, discussing and analyzing historical events on the same spot as where they occurred decades ago, is thought to evoke an intuitive understanding for cause and effect in military operations, both in the past and present.

Furthermore, visits to former war sites provide detailed and vivid images of a historical situation. Books may describe a past event, but the interviewees regard witnessing physical traces of the past as more convincing, because these places refer to an 'authentic' past. Additionally, visits to former war sites made the participants regard the past as more complex. These achievements are in line with the general purposes of the military battlefield tours. Yet, especially in the cases when prior knowledge was confirmed on site, it is questionable whether a more in-depth understanding of past events was developed.

Military battlefield tours also appeal to the participants' imagination. However, how and to what extent the past is imagined strongly depends on the knowledge and cultural background of the participant, as well as the attempts of the participants to actively do something imaginatively with the traces present on site. Here, tensions between the goals of the battlefield tours and the experiences of the participants are exposed. Nevertheless, the military battlefield tours opened up space for linking critical self-reflection of the participants to

their personal, affective experiences. Particularly the visits to cemeteries stimulated the development of personal relationship to past events and past actors, to connect their personal story to greater historical narratives and to collective cultural practices, such as the military culture. Even the participants who had more difficulties seeing the benefits of the other parts of the trip, regarded the visits to the cemeteries as valuable. The distinct design of these sites creates a specific atmosphere and stimulates the development of personal rituals on site.

Recognizing the difficulties of past battles and the dilemmas of past actors plays a key role in making the past appealing to the participants of the military battlefield tours. This resulted in two seemingly contradictory processes: from the cognitive level of recognizing similarities between a past actors' job and one's own, to identifying with the emotions of past military. When analyzing tactical decisions while being on a historical war site, following the perspective of past actors—the re-enactment of past thought—contributes to the development of a more in-depth understanding of the past.

When trying to understand the emotional impact and consequences of warfare, the participants tend to identify with past actors, which sometimes generates dilemmas. In some cases, this is due to the fact that the historical circumstances are too different from the present situation. Then identification confirms the existence of a gap between past and present. In other cases, the studied perspective hampers identification with the historical event, particularly when it concerns controversial actions or involves strong emotions. Then a tension is discernible between a military and a human perspective. Where a human perspective can include pity or understanding for individuals operating within a certain mentality or ideology, the military perspective lacks this possibility. In conclusion, being able to switch between these different modes of experiencing seems to be one of the central lessons of military battlefield tours.

This research considered a relatively small sample of respondents. Further studies are needed in order to solidify these conclusions. Hereby, it is important to take the background, nationality, education, gender and rank of respondents into account, as this project indicates the existence of differences between those groups. While the development of social cohesion through military battlefield tours was not a main topic in this study, it would be interesting to investigate this theme more in-depth. Moreover, the various national 'styles' of conducting military battlefield tours might cause different outcomes of the tours. To understand these differences, international comparative research would be necessary.

This chapter focused on the experiences of active and future military: cadets and officers who are likely to take part in upcoming military missions. The military battlefield tours thereby function as a means to prepare them for

possible future military endeavors. As such, the past is used in function of the future. In the next chapter, I study an opposite process: war veterans who return to sites associated with their past deployment.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING SENSE OF WAR MEMORIES. An analysis of Dutch veteran return trips to former Yugoslavia[1]

1 This text has been revised & resubmitted to an international journal in a slightly adjusted form.

Introduction

In July 2008, Frank, a 42-year-old Dutch military veteran, departed from the Bosnian town of Srebrenica. It was not the first time he did so. Thirteen years earlier Frank had left Srebrenica, but under completely different circumstances. Together with fifteen other members of his unit he was captured by the Bosnian-Serb army and held hostage for a week in Serbian territories. During this week the troops of General Ratko Mladić attacked the so-called safe haven Srebrenica, packed with Bosnian-Muslim refugees from all over the area. This area was supposed to be protected by the Dutch UN forces that were stationed in a battery factory in the neighboring village of Potočari. The occupying Bosnian-Serb troops threatened to kill Frank and the other hostages if NATO executed air strikes on Srebrenica and its surroundings. In the days after the occupation, more than 8,300 Bosnian-Muslims were murdered by the Bosnian-Serb troops while trying to escape to safer areas.[2]

As a hostage, Frank did not see all of this happen. After a terrifying week, he and his colleagues were released and transported to the Netherlands, where they returned to their 'normal' life. Yet, the experiences in former Yugoslavia left their mark, and after a while, Frank developed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Nevertheless, after treatment, Frank decided to go back to Srebrenica in 2008, in company of six other veterans. This time he made sure that he was in control of his departure from the town. He took the wheel of his car and, as he phrases it, left his baggage and bad memories behind. One return trip was followed by many other return trips, the start of a volunteer project in the area, and happy reunions with newly made Bosnian friends.

Frank is not the only veteran who returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina years after his deployment there—many of his colleagues have done so too. Veteran return trips to places associated with military or peacekeeping missions have been happening since at least the nineteenth century (Gatewood & Cameron, 2004). The number of trips surged after the First World War, when soldiers returned to places related to their service (Lloyd 1998, p. 38, p. 145; Walter, 1993, p. 64). Second World War veterans similarly undertook return trips

2 The official number of deaths given by the Potočari Memorial Centre is 8,372—but is much debated (Toom 2020). The number of 8,372 includes the refugees who died of illness or exhaustion on their attempt to escape Srebrenica. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 bodies remain to be found and buried. It is important to realize that besides the 8,372 'direct' victims of the genocide, many more people have died from the consequences of living in the Srebrenica enclave under dire circumstances, before and after the fall of the enclave. These people have for instance died because of the consequences of the long-term malnutrition they experienced in the enclave.

to the places of their deployment—and continue doing so, often accompanied by their families (Captain, 2008; Murakami, 2018). The same goes for veterans of the Vietnam War (Chadwick, 2016; Schwenkel, 2015) and descendants of wartime inhabitants of the former Dutch East Indies (Buchheim, 2015). Nowadays, the popularity of war and memory tourism has caused various commercial tour operators to offer organized trips for war veterans and their families.[3]

Although war tourism (and its sub-category of battlefield tourism) has gained substantial scholarly attention the last decades (e.g., Butler & Suntikul, 2013; Eade & Katić 2018; Lloyd, 1998; Seaton 2000), these studies focus on war tourists in general. Less is known about the experiences of one specific group of visitors: returning veterans. In this chapter, I will focus on this particular form of war tourism. Returning veterans provide an interesting population to research in relation to war tourism: because the search for meaning constitutes an important part of the return trip, the experiences of the returning veterans can tell us more about the way meaning is assigned to war touristic experiences. Moreover, because the link between travel and healing is explicitly present in this form of tourism, this chapter sheds light on the contemporary narratives about the benefits of traveling for tourists' mental and physical health, and the role of place has in this.

As mentioned above, veteran return trips have received some academic attention. Scholars who have researched return trips frame them as secular pilgrimages or rites of passage, thereby hinting to the character of the trips as being personal quests for meaning and salvation (Eade & Katić, 2018; Walter, 1993). As such, they distinguish those trips from general forms of tourism that are predominantly characterized by pleasure and entertainment. The pilgrimage analogy is not only used for trips to former battle sites, but also for journeys to war memorials and even veteran reunions in their home countries (Dubisch, 2005; Michalowski & Dubisch, 2001; Murakami, 2014). Veteran pilgrimages are thereby seen as commemorative practices that allow veterans to remember the past and reconcile with former adversaries (Murakami, 2018, p. 41). The use of the analogy of the pilgrimage seems a logical choice to explain the search for meaning, transformation, and contemplation, as embodied by the traveling veteran. Yet, the framing of veteran return trips as pilgrimages is problematic, as it overlooks other, less romantic, characteristics of travel (Eade & Katić, 2018). A returning veteran could experience disappointment, confrontation, fear or rejection. A return trip might also result in mundane experiences that are more associated with tourism than with personal growth. Additionally,

3 An online search for veteran return trips shows the many holiday tours to WW2 sites and Vietnam that are on offer.

by framing all return trips as pilgrimages, differences between individual cases are lost (Bolderman, 2018, pp. 29–31). Furthermore, the term pilgrimage has a religious connotation that might not be sought for by all returning veterans. And although some researchers use 'secular pilgrimage' in order to avoid such links with religion (e.g., Walter, 1993), that term still implies a search for cathartic and spiritual experiences, and in many studies, the term 'secular' lacks a clear definition (Margry, 2008, p. 30). Lastly, from a moral point of view, the specific history of the Dutch military presence in former Yugoslavia (more on that below) further complicates the analogy with battlefield pilgrimages. In a context of wrongdoings, guilt, and trauma, analogies with pilgrimages are less desirable.

I regard the veteran return trip as a phenomenon that is constituted by a search for meaning engendered by the conviction that re-visiting and re-experiencing places of memory allows for such meaning to be found or constructed. This conviction is rooted in a contemporary belief that tourism to specific places allows for meaningful experiences. Think for example about the popularity of 'meaningful tourism' (Cohen, 2011) or 'personal memory tourism' (Marschall, 2012; 2014), the view that someone's mental and physical health benefits from traveling (Urry & Larsen, 2011), or the current enthusiasm for exposure therapies as a means to treat anxiety disorders (Jongedijk, 2014). Thereby, individual memories, collective memories and cultural narratives about the deployment and its aftermath strongly impact the way veterans envision and carry out their return trip. This is of particular relevance in the case a military mission is negatively framed in the collective memory (Assman, 2010), as is the case with the Dutch presence in former Yugoslavia and Bosnia in the 1990s. Returning to places that are associated with failure and guilt is very different from returning to places connected to military heroism.

In this chapter, I analyze the experiences and processes of meaning-making of the Dutch veterans who have returned to former Yugoslavia. I argue that returning to former places of deployment provides a way to make sense of war memories. Visits to tangible sites of the past are thought to provide the clues for redrawing memories and creating new insights. Because the urge to undertake a return trip is rooted in veterans' wartime experiences as well as in the public opinion about the mission, I pay ample attention to this.

Returning to places of memory

An important aspect of the veteran return trip is constituted by the possibility to visit the places that have been important for a veteran during the mission—

places that are saturated with memories. Malpas (1999) reasons that the places people visit and experience at specific moments in time strongly influence the way people construct an identity, a sense of self (p. 177). Place and memory are tightly bound (p. 181). Landscapes can be regarded as bearers of the traces of everyone who has been there (Ingold, 1993, p. 152). Particular traces within the landscape evoke memories with people who actively engage in discovering those traces and allocating their meaning. Experiencing a familiar memory-filled landscape can therefore be seen as form of remembering (p. 153). This process of remembering does not only occur on a cognitive level. Looking at a road in a landscape, for example, might encourage someone to recall the physical activity of walking that road (p. 167). Consequently, through an active engagement with familiar landscapes, former inhabitants might discover meaningful memories, both cognitively and bodily. The discovery of meaningful memories could particularly be important for veterans who are traumatized or have difficulty remembering or recounting their wartime experiences.

While returning to memory-filled places is a way to remember past events—cognitively or bodily—a return to such places is also a way to build on new memories and identities (Marschall, 2015b, p. 40). The purpose of revisiting places of memory is therefore twofold: it is both a confrontation with past memories and past selves, and an opportunity to add new layers to these memories and selves. Connerton (2009) argues that people often need a spatial component in order to deal with the temporal changes that happen in their lives (p. 14). Being in a specific place can help to understand the changes that happened in the life of the visitor of that place and allows to reflect on the life that lies outside (p. 17). Revisiting places that were important during a veteran's deployment then also becomes a way to contemplate the time passed after the time of service.

Assigning meaning to war experiences

Whereas the close connection between place and memory provides an explanation for the desire to revisit places of memory, the need of veterans to return to places of their deployment should also be seen in light of their processing of wartime experiences and allocating meaning to these experiences. The processing of war experiences depends on both cultural narratives, collective memories and individual articulations of these wartime experiences. Culturally, the experience of being in a war is generally represented as incomprehensible and mysterious. What it is actually like to be involved in a war is something that is

considered difficult to explain to outsiders (Harari, 2008, p. 7; Hynes, 1997). Only the ones who have been there in person are seen as able to understand what war really is like. In reality, those who participate in a war often only witness fragments of that war, and do not have access to the bigger picture (Hynes, 1997, pp. 12–14). Institutional narratives that are present within the army, for instance on how a military person should react to their deployment, further complicate veteran's articulations of war experiences (Molendijk, Kramer & Verweij, 2016, p. 348).

Cultural narratives and collective memories of war are constructs that are always in development. Yet, individual articulations of war experiences are formed and interpreted within existing narrative frameworks and memory cultures (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper 2000, p. 18; Straub, 2010, p. 222). Within these frameworks and cultures, experiencing a war either causes mental growth and maturation, provides a soldier with a revelatory perspective on reality, or gives rise to more negative experiences of estrangement, disillusion, and trauma (Harari 2008, 2–4). An individual is dependent on these structures in order to understand, process and retell his or her experience of war. Moreover, hierarchy and privilege to articulate a certain story also impact the veteran (Lomsky-Feder, 2004, p. 103). This does not mean that individual voices are completely obscured by cultural narratives, but rather that individual accounts of the war experience are created in negotiation with existing narrative structures and within the limitations of the memory field (Lomsky-Feder, 2004, p. 83).

Individually, composing and sharing a personal narrative about war experiences assists in processing those war experiences in a positive way. Psychological research about Dutch peacekeeping veterans in Cambodia shows that veterans who assigned positive meaning to their war experiences adjusted better to life after the mission. The veterans who succeeded to assign positive meaning to their deployment period were also able to narrate their thoughts and feelings in a coherent manner. They for example found significance in the development of professional skills, in an enlarged knowledge of life, grown self-confidence, increased value for life, or in the experience of comradery (Schok, Kleber & Boeije, 2010, p. 297). Even traumatic experiences might result in assigning positive meaning to the deployment period, if for example a veteran succeeds in constructing a narrative of post-traumatic growth (Schok, Kleber, Elands & Weerts, 2008, p. 364). In the cases where veterans failed to assign meaning to their deployment experiences, stress related complaints were more likely to occur. These veterans exhibited a strong perception of danger, spoke about not being understood, felt lost between two worlds, experienced powerlessness during the mission, and had unfinished emotional business (Schok, Kleber &

Boeije, 2010). This might for example be the case when private memories do not match existing cultural scripts. At that moment, it becomes more difficult to articulate war experiences (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper, 2000).

Hence, the way veterans recount their wartime experiences is depending on cultural scripts that assist them in composing a coherent, transferable, and believable story. Constructing a narrative helps veterans to assign meaning to their experiences and work through the past. Yet, it is not always possible to rely on cultural scripts, for example when the use of a specific narrative is connected to privilege, hierarchy or trauma, or when the pre-existing narratives do not comply with the experiences of a veteran. In these cases, the question is how veterans find meaning in their deployment, and what the role of the return trip could be in the search for meaning.

The Dutch military involvement in former Yugoslavia and its public reception

In order to understand the wartime memories, experiences, and meaning-making of the returning veterans, it is necessary to review the Dutch military missions to former Yugoslavia and their aftermath. Between 1992 and 2016, approximately 50,000 Dutch men and women were deployed in former Yugoslavia as part of different UN, NATO and EU missions, for a period between 4 and 6 months.[4] The UN missions occurred between 1992 and 1995—a period that is characterized by escalating violence between the different ethnic groups in former Yugoslavia. Soon after the start of the war in the spring of 1992, the area that is now known as Bosnia became the main center of tension. The UN missions had a mandate that focused on peacekeeping. The peacekeepers were supposed to be a 'neutral' party in the conflict, which meant that they were not allowed to choose sides or help local citizens. 'Neutrality' also implied that the peacekeepers were lightly armed, and that they could only use their weapons when violence was used against them. As will be discussed in more detail in the analysis, the feelings of powerlessness caused by this limited mandate have had a large impact on the Dutch UN peacekeepers. After the Dayton Peace Treaty was signed in December 1995, NATO took charge over the international

4 Data Dutch Veterans Institute: https://www.veteraneninstituut.nl/missie/voormalig-joegoslavie/. The number of 50,000 includes military persons that went to the area more than once. Four to six months is the duration of the majority of the deployments. Some individual deployments took up longer than six months.

missions in the newly founded state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. These missions had a more military mandate, and focused on implementation and stabilization of the military matters related to Dayton Treaty. The EU missions are a follow up to the NATO missions. The Dutch participation ended in 2016.

The Dutch military involvement in former Yugoslavia encompassed more than the protection of the enclave of Srebrenica, and knew numerous confrontations with aggression, violence, which resulted in eighteen Dutch casualties. Still, the Dutch participation in the different military missions has become known for its incapacity to protect the Bosnian-Muslim refugees in Srebrenica. In July 1995, after weeks of provocations, the withholding of food, supplies, weapons and personnel, the Bosnian-Serb troops of Ratko Mladić attacked the enclave. Over the few days of the attacks, more and more weakened Dutch units could not hold their posts, and the people of Srebrenica were left to their fate. The Dutch military refused to take up refugees in their already packed compound, and after Mladić told the Dutch commanding officers that he was willing to transport the refugees to a different area without harming them, the Dutch assisted the Bosnian-Serb troops separating Muslim men and women and place them in busses. Many of these men were killed in the genocide that followed the days after.

In the aftermath of the fall of the enclave, images of the Dutch military (known as 'Dutchbat') helping the Bosnian-Serb troops in Srebrenica went all over the world. Although the protection of the enclave has been perceived as an 'impossible mission' (Klep & Winslow, 1999, p. 117), debates about the complicity of the Dutch government and commanding officers to the crimes are ongoing. In 1996, the Dutch government required the Dutch Institute for War Documentation (NIOD) to investigate the course of events. While the 6,000-page report concluded that 'the mass murders did not take place under the eyes of Dutchbat' (NIOD 2002, p. 3153), the Dutch government considered the content of the report cause for their resignation. The consequences of this report also resulted in numerous emotional discussions between Dutch historians and the researchers involved in the report of the NIOD (Ankersmit et al, 2003). Still, these actions and discussion have not put an end to the media stories about international responsibility, conspiracies and cover-ups (Algra, Elands & Schoeman, 2007). Every now and then, new information about the course of events of July 1995 emerges, leaving the events an open wound for everyone affected by them. In the national public opinion, the Dutch involvement in former Yugoslavia has been linked to cowardice and half-heartedness (Molendijk, 2020, pp. 144–5). A similar narrative can be found in the international context (Algra, Elands & Schoeman, 2007, p. 404). Interestingly,

it is contended that the Dutch public opinion on individual Dutchbat veterans is more positive than one would expect based on the negative media coverage of the mission (406). Still, the negative public reception of the mission has left significant impact on the veterans and continues to frustrate them (Molendijk 2020, pp. 146–148).

Methods

This study is based on semi-structured interviews with seventeen male veterans who served in former Yugoslavia between 1993 and 2002. The interviewees were recruited through a call in a magazine that is distributed to all Dutch veterans.[5] The veterans who responded to this call assisted in finding more interviewees by posting the call in closed Facebook groups for veterans. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in 2016–2017 and had an average duration of 1 hour and 40 minutes. The interviews have been recorded and were transcribed verbatim. All interviewees have consented to participate in the research. To preserve their anonymity, a pseudonym has been assigned to all participants. Of the seventeen participants, eight were professional military of different ranks at the time of their deployment in former Yugoslavia. The other nine interviewees were conscription soldiers who mainly worked in transport, logistics, or as medical support staff. While the conscripts voluntarily signed up for the mission, because they wanted to do something 'useful' during their time of service, the professionals were selected for the mission. Six interviewees said that they suffered from severe psychological complaints after the deployment: four conscripts and two professionals.

While all interviewed veterans returned to Bosnia, they did so in different forms and constellations. Some returned once, others multiple times. For their first return trip, ten veterans returned in the company of a good friend, family member, or partner, while six others went with one or more (former) colleagues. One veteran returned as part of a volunteer project. The time spent in Bosnia for each return visit was one week on average. Whereas veterans who traveled with (former) colleagues tended to visit war related sites only, trips with partners or family members also included more holiday-like destinations.

Most of the interviewed veterans were deployed between 1993 and 1997, when large UN and NATO army units were stationed in central and east Bosnia. These units consisted of both professional military and conscription soldiers. In

5 For example, the closed Facebook group 'Back to Bosnia', which has more than 2,000 members.

1996, conscription was suspended indefinitely in the Netherlands. Since that year, the Dutch army consists of professionals only. Hence, the Dutch military involvement in former Yugoslavia and Bosnia took place during a period of transition in the Dutch armed forces. For many Dutch citizens, the military is a closed-off world with strange rules and traditions (Klep, 2019). This distance between the Dutch army and citizens is affected by the fact that the Netherlands does not have a strong militaristic culture, although some state that this perspective is changing (Klep, 2019). The (perceived) distance between the army and Dutch citizens likely has had an impact on the way veterans felt able to speak about their experiences. As a female researcher without a personal or professional connection to the military, this distance must have permeated the interviews too. On the other hand, the fact that I was not associated with the military may have caused the interviewees to feel less threatened or judged by me, and the possibility to contribute to scientific research was an incentive for the veterans to join in the project.[6]

The interviews were structured by an interview guide, which contained questions about the life of the veteran, the deployment experiences, the return, the reflection on the mission and the return trip relating to the life course of the veteran. As such, the interviews had a chronological structure. Thus, veterans were invited to structure their memories of their deployment and its aftermath in a chronological way. Narrative analysis has been applied to the interviews on two levels: first, by focusing on the construction of the life story of the veteran and the connections between the narrated events (Bamberg, 2012), second, by looking at the way the veterans position their story against the collective narrative about the mission and its aftermath. Narratives function as the mediator between an individual and the world (Gustavsen, 2017, p. 515; Wood, 1991, p. 27). The narratives of the Dutch veterans therefore give us insight in the way veterans articulate their individual memories, experiences, and reflections within a specific social cultural context.

Interviewing (possibly) traumatized persons about (possibly) sensitive experiences requires a specific attitude by the interviewer as well as ethical considerations. Establishing a sense of trust is of great importance. Time and personal involvement herein form crucial elements: taking the time to make the interviewee feel at ease before the interview by chit-chatting, and listening

6 Some interviewees explicitly mentioned that they decided to participate in the project because I was neither in the military nor a journalist, but a researcher with an (assumed) different perspective on the mission. Also, the fact that I was not solely focusing on Srebrenica veterans (as most other research about Dutch veterans does) proved to be an incentive to participate.

without interruption, even when accounts get repetitive or contain incorrect factual information (Leydesdorff, 2014). Therefore, the interviewee remains in control of the created story.[7] This has for example caused some of the interviews to focus predominantly on the return trip, while in other cases the experiences during the mission turned out to be more important for the interviewee. The interviewees' choice for an emphasis on certain episodes (and the omission of others) within their life story illustrates the weight the interviewee ascribes to these experiences (Leydesdorff & Adler, 2013). Traumatic memories were only discussed when brought up by the interviewee, and if the interviewee indicated that he preferred not to speak about a topic this was accepted without questioning (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 25). Yet, in some cases, it was clear that recollecting memories evoked emotions, and the interview might have been a difficult experience for the interviewee. In these situations, extra attention was paid to evaluate the interview after the recorder was stopped.

Making sense of war memories

Recounting war experiences: contrast, dissonance and unreality

In the next section, I discuss the wartime experiences of the veterans. As the motivation to return can be traced back to the wartime experiences of the veterans, and in particular to experiences of contrast, dissonance and unreality, it is necessary to discuss these first. I start with Dennis:

> *And then you suddenly stand at the other side. Just further down, and there is the war. And then you think, oh, strange. Very strange. Well, you do that a few times. And every time you leave, and you return [from a mission], you leave a part of yourself there. You return differently.*
> *—Dennis, 46*

Like Dennis, who served in Bosnia three times, veterans speak about their deployment in former Yugoslavia as something that has changed them, either temporarily or more permanently. Such changes have everything to do with the exposure to an extreme situation like a war. Changes appear on different levels: in one's personality, behavior, emotional responses, or even perspective on life

7 Acknowledging that a life story is always a construction in which the interviewer is implicated (see Bryman 2012, 578).

(cf. Molendijk, Kramer & Verweij, 2015, p. 352). These changes are not necessarily negative, and can be seen as a sign of maturation. Still, understanding the causes for these changes and dealing with them is not always easy, especially in the case of experienced trauma.

What are the reasons for these changes? In the quote that opened this paragraph, Dennis describes how going back and forth to war zones resulted in an experience of estrangement. Every time he crossed the border between war and peace, this experience left a mark, it changed him. Such an experience of estrangement can be regarded as an experience of contrast. Experiences of contrast take up a central position in the stories of the veterans. The identified experiences of contrast occur on different levels. Some are associated with experiencing war in general; others are particular to the missions in former Yugoslavia. And while the contrast is sometimes related to experiences that took place during the war, it is at other times pertaining to the contrast between life during and after the war. In the remaining part of this section, I elaborate on these different forms of contrast and dissonance. I will return to the notion of being changed in the final part of the analysis.

The difficulty of grasping what war is really like is fundamental to the experiences of contrast and dissonance. Take Bart, an officer who served in Bosnia in the early 2000s. Bart describes his incapacity to comprehend what happened during the war:

> *[I've seen] those abandoned villages. There, you really saw nothing, not even a dead dog in the streets. Just abandoned houses, debris. And you'll think 'my god, what happened here?' It's very difficult to imagine that. You only see it. But then you start to relate it to the things we learned during our preparation, and think 'yes, yes, this has happened here'. And eh, how do I phrase it… It's incomprehension, real incomprehension. It's not possible to imagine what that's like. And… at the same time you don't want to be bothered by that, because it also moves you.*
> *—Bart, 61*

In this quote, Bart emphasizes his position as an outsider to the war. He is a witness to the consequences of a conflict between others, a pair of eyes. His knowledge of the events that took place helps him to create a certain image, but instead of pulling him closer into the events, this information only causes greater incomprehension. Meanwhile, Bart illustrates the ambivalence between the urge to think about what happened and the need to stay away from his emotions in order to be able to perform his job—something that underlines the

experienced dissonance between simultaneously wanting and not wanting to engage with the conflict.

A word that veterans used multiple times to describe their deployment is 'unreal'. This idea of unreality is first of all related to the places that veterans encountered during their stay in the region. Veterans for example referred to unreality when describing their compound. For some, it felt like 'an inverted prison, designed to keep people out', while others characterize it as '*Center Parcs* [a resort] surrounded by barbed wire'. These descriptions point to the experienced dissonance between the outside world—the war—and the relatively safe inner world of the compound. A similar contrast is mentioned by veterans who frequently had to cross the border between the safer areas in Croatia and the warzones in Bosnia, for instance when driving people and supplies back and forth to the compounds. Whereas Croatia felt like a 'holiday', complete with beaches and nights spent in hotels, Bosnia is associated with danger, violence, and unpredictability.

'Unreal' is also used to describe encounters with the landscape. Interviewees mention the difficulties they had in simultaneously experiencing the beauty of nature and the ugliness of war—a common trope in war narratives (Fussell, 1975, pp. 231–269). How can beauty and war co-exist? As Erik, who was a young conscript at the time, explains:

> *You know, we always drove around eh… a lake. Lake Prozor. (…) And there you have a view… and you're enjoying it… You're sitting there with your flak jacket and your helmet and your gun, taking into account everything that can go wrong, and you're enjoying the view. That is why I… that contrast…*
> *—Erik, 43*

Erik continues his story talking about how he sometimes questions his memories of that time. Was it really that beautiful? Or do his memories fool him? For Erik, whom I spoke to before and after his return trip, questions about this contrast between nature and war and the truthfulness of his memories were in the front of his mind, and one of the reasons to return to Bosnia. Daniel, another conscript, tells that the co-existence of nature and violence was something that kept captivating him once he returned to the Netherlands:

> *I used to look at online videos of people being executed. Because I then… I showed them to my wife and asked her "what do you see on this video?" And she would reply with, yes, I see people being shot, terrible. And I would ask her 'but don't you hear that the birds are singing, isn't that strange, that that just continues?' She wasn't looking at that at all, but I was at those times very much in to you know, how the nature smelled there, and how it sounded… yes… you try to awaken a certain feeling…'*
> *—Daniel, 45*

A contrast particular to the mission in former Yugoslavia is the one between the desire to act and the experience of powerlessness, especially during the UN missions. For the interviewees who were part of these missions, powerlessness forms an important aspect of the way they review that mission, and the meaning they assign to it. Many veterans report feeling deeply frustrated about their period as UN military.

Powerlessness also runs through the account of Jaap, who was stationed as an observer in besieged Sarajevo. Jaap's daily job was to register the number of bombs, shelling, and artillery fires. His story, too, is loaded with frustration and fear, caused by the inability to act in a meaningful way and the double feelings pertaining to his relatively comfortable position in a UN observation post:

> *It was winter, yes, that made you feel schizophrenic, because despite the fact that there were tensions, it wasn't your war, and you had enough food, clothes, a place to sleep, a warm car… and you'd drive through the town [of Sarajevo] and old ladies walked around carrying a bunch of wood on their back. Yes. But you weren't allowed to help them. No. I really didn't like that, it was very exasperating.*
> *—Jaap, 70*

For many veterans, the experience of powerlessness has resulted in anger with the United Nations and the Dutch government. This anger seems to be rooted in the Dutch government's framing of the un mission in former Yugoslavia as being safe, non-violent, and purposeful, though the reality was much bleaker. Veterans felt trapped in a dangerous situation, while not being allowed to act upon it accordingly. Take for example David, a conscript who drove an ambulance:

> *They told everyone, the UN is impartial, nothing will happen to them. (…) But stuff did happen, because if you drive around in a green area and you have a white car you're an easy target, and then that red cross on your car suddenly had a hole in it, because they tried to shoot at you, albeit just for the fun of practicing.*
> *—David, 45*

David explains how he felt more in danger because of the specific mandate he had to work with—his 'neutral', white ambulance attracted gunfire instead of repelling it. Experiences like these have enlarged his mistrust in the un and the aims of the mission. The contrast between feeling unprotected while having to perform an unachievable job runs through the accounts of the un veterans. By not being able to match expectations and reality, by feeling lured into an impossible mission, and by being confronted with powerlessness, it becomes difficult to assign meaning to the deployment (Lifton, 2005, p. 39).

For the Dutch military, the contrast between the desire to act and the feeling of powerlessness was reinforced by the negative public reception and media coverage of the mission to former Yugoslavia. Veterans were again confronted with powerlessness, this time in the form of a national judgment that seemed difficult to refute. Marcel, for example, a non-commissioned officer who served in Bosnia twice, experienced a contrast between his personal memories and the collective narrative in the Netherlands:

> *For years, I have never spoken about the fact that I have been there, although I feel proud about the things we achieved. We worked around the clock under precarious conditions. But the term Srebrenica is so loaded, everyone immediately associates it with a black page in the history of Dutch defense, or assumes that the Dutch are responsible for the slaughter of 8000 men. I can of course mention that I wasn't there at that moment, but the image is very persistent…*
> *—Marcel, 46*

Like Marcel, many interviewees have not been able to talk about the deployment at all. These veterans relate their time in former Yugoslavia to feelings of shame, aversion, distrust, and powerlessness—even in cases when their personal experiences are quite positive. Additionally, because of the ongoing focus of politicians and the media on Srebrenica, veterans who participated in other missions feel ignored. Here, the incongruity between personal memories and the negative coverage of the mission in the Netherlands, has restricted veterans' public and private articulations of their wartime experiences.

In conclusion, experiences of contrast, dissonance and unreality, as described above, impact the way veterans find meaning in their memories of war. As illustrated, their accounts revolve around feelings of estrangement, powerlessness, frustration and misunderstanding caused by both general characteristics of war and the particular features of the mission to former Yugoslavia and its aftermath. The impossibility to comprehend what a war is like, even for

the ones who participated in it, gives rise to questions that are difficult to answer once having returned home. How to describe the experience of war and the changes it enforces on someone? How to understand the gap between expectations and reality? Between beauty and violence? How to deal with feelings of powerlessness, guilt, and shame? And how to relate to a negative collective narrative about the war? Not being able to formulate answers to these questions keeps the mythical status of war experiences intact. As such, it prevents experiences from being processed. One way to find answers is to return to the places related to a mission.

Processing memories during return trips

When asked about their motives to return to places familiar to their deployment in former Yugoslavia, the word that most veterans immediately mentioned was 'curiosity'. Curiosity, for example, to see places with their own eyes, to find out whether the area has improved or not, or look for answers to personal questions. Often, this curiosity developed over the decade(s) after the deployment, and is influenced by (online) stories of veterans who had already returned. 'Curiosity' is also a way to distinguish from feelings of nostalgia. Moreover, 'curiosity' could also indicate a desire to stay away from admitting to the emotional impact of war—something that might be associated with weakness and femininity. As Willem, a retired officer, explains:

> *I think the main reason for me to return was curiosity, what it looks like now, what has become of it 20 years later. (…) just visiting the places where I've been to, eh, yes, go back in time. But I wasn't motivated by, eh, nostalgia, it was just curiosity, I didn't want to go back there because I've suffered some kind of trauma, no, absolutely not.*
> *—Willem, 65*

Like Willem, other interviewees emphasized the fact that for them the urge to return was merely a case of curiosity, and nothing else. Thus, they stay away from classical narratives, and instead focus on their personal interests (Gustavsen, 2017). These personal interests are often related to specific individual memories. As seen in Erik's quote in the previous paragraph, sometimes this interest has to do with questions about the validity of personal memories. Are the memories actually correct? At other times this interest is directed towards understanding the changes that have occurred to the region: Willem, for example, deliberately

re-took the photos he shot during his deployment on the exact same spot, in order to capture the differences.

Questions about the truthfulness of memories specifically relate to bodily and sensorial experiences—the kind of experiences that are difficult to recall once having returned to the Netherlands. Visiting Bosnia thereby functions as a means to re-locate these bodily and sensorial experiences (cf. Ingold, 1993). These experiences point to a sense of familiarity that veterans feel to have lost or forgotten after their return to the Netherlands, and veterans describe their first return trip as an experience of 'coming home' (Marschall, 2015b).

Veterans who speak about familiarity and coming home do not only connect that experience to seemingly innocent memories about the way a place looked, smelled or sounded like, but also noticed that their body reacted to being in an area they associated with danger. As soon as they set foot on Bosnian soil, they felt that their former alertness had returned, and for example started to drive in the middle of the road for safety reasons. For most veterans, it took a few days to get rid of this sensation. Even though they rationally understood that the danger was gone, their bodily memory told them differently. Here, the contrast between warzones and peace resurfaces.

Most veterans are positive about their search for memories during their return trip. But not all veterans have a similar perspective. Daniel is more ambivalent:

> *It was good to go back because I had so many questions. Like, what will it do to me? Will it do something with me in positive or negative sense? (…) Well I went back and I visited all the places I had been, but actually it didn't do as much with me as I expected. Not the smells, not the colors (…) But I have realized that ever since I went there I don't think about it as often as I used to do. In the beginning I was really stuck in that world, in that atmosphere. I wanted to stick to that, watching videos, photos… And recollect memories, keep them, like, oh, what if I lose them…*
> *—Daniel, 45*

In the beginning of the interview, Daniel uses the metaphor of the magician's act in order to describe his memories about the war—they are both a myth he wants to keep alive and a trick he wants to unravel. Interestingly, even though Daniel's expectations did not match his experiences on the ground, he considers the return trip as helpful—not because he managed to relive his memories, but because going back caused him to be less absorbed by those memories. Being confronted with the fact that the area was not as alluring as he had imagined it to be thereby helped him to normalize his ideas about what Bosnia was like.

Disappointment is something that comes back in various interviews. This disappointment is predominantly caused by the fact that familiar sites changed since the war, and are sometimes unrecognizable. This even goes for veterans who returned soon after their deployment: Maarten, a conscript, traveled to Bosnia in 1996, two years after his serving. Although his return trip was pretty military in character—he could use his military permit and sleep at NATO compounds—he was disappointed that familiar places had changed. They were not 'his' places anymore. Officer Peter describes how he experienced that the disappointment was twofold:

> *You know things have been restored, and you've read about it, and the atmosphere you experience and the mode of the people, that is different. It's not so much as a disappointment, but when you walk around, you think hey, you know, you'll take a part of that old tension and mode with you, and you'll walk around and think, yes, you miss something actually. It may sound a bit weird, you miss something, but on the other hand you'll think, fine.*
> *—Peter, 68*

As Peter explains, the feeling of disappointment or, in his case, missing something, is contradictory: on the one hand, changes are a sign of progress and development. On the other hand, the desire to re-experience the positive elements of the mission, like the sense of adventure or the experience of comradery, is present too. This is not uncommon for war veterans (Herzog, 1992, p. 202).

While it might be attractive to return to places related to positive war memories, there are also sites that are more daunting. Various interviewees were confronted with violence during their deployment. For them, returning to places related to that violence is not a case of longing for the past, but rather a means to process severe traumatic memories. Eddie, a non-commissioned officer, explains how he visited the site where he experienced gunfire:

> *I visited the place where I have been shot in December '94. It was quite a heavy day. Almost nothing has changed there, only the vegetation has returned. When we approached it, I immediately recognized the spot, stopped the car and said "here it is." The memory was completely intact. (…) You see everything passing by in flashes, I spent two hours sitting on a little bench there, just like, eh, letting it go. But because of that I have been able to leave a part there. I have been there, it's good.*
> *—Eddie, 62*

Eddie's visit to the spot where he had been shot helped him to work through his memories of a traumatic event. As is the case with more interviewees who suffer(ed) from psychological complaints related to their deployment, Eddie's trip worked as a (voluntary) final step in his medical treatment. Going back to the place of the trauma thereby functioned as a way to contextualize traumatic memories and fill in the gaps in his memories of the event, by observing, smelling and listening to the surroundings.[8] As such, the information present on the site of Eddie's trauma helped him to rebuild his memory of the event.

The fear and violence that the veterans encountered are not always connected to one specific site, route or area, but sometimes have more to do with the overall experiences of a mission. Visits to more general sites of war can also trigger emotions and provide relief. Jaap, a former officer, tells how he and his travel companions went to the Tunnel Museum in Sarajevo, dedicated to the memory of the siege:

> *[The group] went into a room to watch a video. (…) So I stood there at the door, and watched those images, and well, I cried like a baby. Really. But after we did that, I thought, you know, I think I have gotten rid of it. I can now speak about it in a normal manner, yes. So I'm really happy that I went there.*
> *—Jaap, 70*

Places like the Tunnel Museum narrate the story of (parts of) the war in Bosnia. Yet, they do more than that: they also function as a place for commemoration, and, in the case of the Tunnel Museum, are a symbol for hope and resistance during the siege of Sarajevo. For some of the returnees, like Jaap, visiting such symbolic and information dense places helped to work through the past.

In conclusion, all interviewees are positive about their return trip. Some describe it as a real breakthrough that helped them to alleviate their complaints. For others, the return trip is a means to process memories or meet a sense of curiosity. Visits to physical places thereby worked as a way to confirm the validity of memories, fill in memory gaps, or temporarily delve into a sense of the past. Meanwhile, disappointment about expectations that are not met also comes along with these visits. Visits to physical places of traumatic memories too served as a means to come to terms with the past. Here, bodily encounters with places

8 This is not unusual: PTSD often comes with a diminished ability to contextualize emotions like fear or anxiety (Schauer & Elbert 2014, 13). Attempting to contextualize these emotions by embedding them in a larger story, contributes to alleviating stress related complaints (14).

of memory assists in contextualizing feelings of fear and anxiety and getting access to a larger story. These visits do not only work for sites that are directly connected to personal memories, but also apply to more general remnants and representations of war.

Creating new stories and insights

The previous section focused on inner quests for answers about personal questions that focused on the period of the mission. Yet, for many veterans, personal pursuits for meaning gradually develop into an outward directed perspective. By encountering new information, new stories and new people, old memories are put in motion. In this section, I delve into this change of perspective. I discuss veterans' urge to show relatives the reasons for being changed, the desire to be in contact with locals, to learn about the war and the contemporary political situation in the area, and the aspiration to help other veterans and locals by means of volunteer work.

As mentioned before, serving in a war is thought to leave its traces: experiencing extreme situations at a young age and in isolation from family and friends changes people (Lifton, 2005). These changes vary; they can be positive or negative, temporary or permanent, have little impact on daily life or a lot. These variations make it difficult for veterans to immediately understand how they have changed. The same goes for understanding the exact reasons for being changed: often, veterans realize that the causes for the change are to be found in the mission, but are not sure in which aspects of the mission. As seen in earlier parts of this analysis, returning to the place of a mission is thought to assist in finding answers to personal questions about that mission—questions that are often related to experienced contrast. Yet, for many veterans, this search for answers is not only related to personal questions or personal acceptation. For them, going back also serves as a means to show others the causes for being changed, and provides answers to questions that they might have about them. Dennis tells how he wants his family to join him to Bosnia:

> *You know, I went through a lot of misery, afterwards. Divorce and stuff like that. That does something with you. And they all had to witness that. And yes, then I think, I want to show you the cause for this. You know, where I have been and how it is there. You know, just the smell, the nature, the people…*
> *—Dennis, 46*

Dennis's remark resonates the idea that witnessing and encountering physical sites provides clues to questions about his life and behavior after the various military missions he participated in. For Bart, who returned to Bosnia multiple times in different constellations, there is another element that plays a role in his choice to take friends and family with him to Bosnia: recognition. As he explains:

> *Yes, yes, I don't know… I don't know how I can explain this… it eh… has to do with uh… yes recognition, I think. Like eh… I have seen this. And this is what it does to me. Actually, more like… I hope you can understand me now.*
> *—Bart, 61*

Bart's search for recognition is related to his urge to truly be understood by the people that are close to him; and by joining him on a return trip and spending time to learn about the things that happened to him, they carry out such recognition. This search for recognition must be related to the collective narrative in the Netherlands about the mission, although Bart himself does not mention that explicitly. The idea that it is difficult for outsiders to imagine what war must be like, and therefore to understand what it has done to someone is mentioned by many other veterans. By taking family and friends along on the return trip, veterans feel more entitled to open up about the war and its impact on them.

During the return trips, veterans not only aim to open up towards relatives, but also towards local people. Many veterans mention the desire to meet locals as one of the reasons to go back. Sometimes, this desire is connected to the fact that during the mission the military was not allowed to have much contact with the local people, unless their job asked for it. Having personal encounters with locals complements something that veterans report to have missed during the deployment, and many veterans are proud to have met Bosnian people because of their return trip. At other times the desire to meet locals is related to seeking answers to questions about the general attitude towards the Dutch. Do local people have a negative opinion about the Dutch military? Tom, who served as a conscript in Srebrenica but had returned to the Netherlands before the fall of the enclave, explains how his motive to return to Bosnia was related to feelings of guilt and shame, thereby echoing the Dutch collective narrative:

> *Just like… we have been there… but we didn't do anything… in my eyes, in my experience… almost nothing. Or at least too little. We left them… (…) And for me it is also a feeling of guilt. And shame. Like, eh, you know, I go back. To talk with the people there. See how they see us. How they think about us. I had very negative thoughts about that. But [I now know] that people feel more or less happy about our presence. Which has removed a part of those feelings of guilt and shame.*
> *—Tom, 44*

Veterans experience the attitude of the locals towards them as being less judgmental than expected, and is seen as a positive contribution to the processing of memories. For some veterans, meeting locals even entailed encountering former adversaries. David, the ambulance driver, reports how he and his brother met a man close to the place his brother served at:

> *That guy tells us like yes, those mountains there, that was where I was during the war. And we were like, okay, (…) he was the bastard who was firing cannon shots over our heads. And he was smirking like yes, that's correct. And those are really special things, because it makes the stories so extremely personal, but also extremely close-by, it confronts, and it shocks a bit, but it also very quickly gives a kind of safety and joy, because a guy like that has also continued with his life, and is making jokes about it. (..) You know, I've found more peace because of the moderateness that people there approached me with, than because of any medication I've ever taken.*
> *—David, 45*

For David, meeting former adversaries served as an incentive to continue his own life without feeling too restrained by his war experiences. By getting to know people who had gone through a lot (among others, the mothers of Srebrenica), he could put his experiences in perspective. David clearly labels the different phases he went through as a returnee. Where he used his first return to Bosnia as a way to confront himself with his memories and kick-off a therapy trajectory, he describes his consequent return tips—undertaken after finishing the treatment—as a way to meet locals and go more in-depth:

> *[During my first return in 2005], I stood on Sniper Alley [Sarajevo's infamous main street] with a heavy heart. It was really difficult for me to see the holes in the street. It was shitty that some things were still not restored. (…) But comparing the image I had of the war period with the contemporary one also helped me to put things in perspective, to have things settle down, and to follow my own route in the process of working through the past. [Due to that] in 2012 I could go more in-depth, talk with locals, and yes, it's very comforting if someone says, you know, you did what you*

could, it wasn't enough, but other people weren't there, while you were. And now you even have returned, which shows your dedication.
—David, 45

Like David, other interviewees also returned to Bosnia multiple times. What for them started as a personal quest to find answers and comfort gradually developed into an interest in the war, its participants and its consequences. Moreover, David changed from someone who wanted to go back in order to come to terms with his own past into someone who now assists other veterans on their first return trip. Frank describes his multiple visits to Srebrenica as a way to continue his 'participation' in the conflict:

For myself, I'm something like, in '95 a lot of things happened, and reflecting on the moments that I have been back, I have experienced all those things once again. Then, men fled, were killed and ended up in mass graves. I've been to a mass grave that was just located. I joined the commemoration, I held the coffins in my hands, and it might sound a bit weird, but, how can I say it, I was part of history then, and now I'm part of that same history by carrying those coffins to their final places.
—Frank, 42

For Frank, his yearly returns to Bosnia are a way to stay involved with the area and continue his story there. By meeting and speaking to people in the area, he attempts to widen his scope and learn about the war. As such, he continuously builds on his memories about the war and its consequences. Kasper, who worked on military communications in besieged Sarajevo, also regards his many returns to the city and country as a way to learn about the war from locals. He contrasts his past absence of interest in the area to his current enthusiasm:

[During the war] we literally said to each other, build some walls around [the conflict area], put a roof on it and have them sort it out themselves. I'm not going to get shot because of them. Only when I returned to Bosnia was I able to nuance this image. You'll see what other people went through during war (…) and you'll get to know many different perspectives. That is very valuable to me.
—Kasper, 45

Frank and Kasper have both engaged in volunteer projects in the area. They are not the only veterans who did so: about half of the interviewees got involved in some kind of volunteer work. The form this volunteer work varies: from individual initiatives to assist other returning veterans, to projects where groups of veterans work together on for example renovating public facilities or schools. The interviewees describe their urge to do volunteer work as a way to be of significance. Interestingly, Kasper is the only volunteering veteran who explicitly links the opportunity to do volunteer work to the specific features of the mission and the powerlessness he experienced. The other veterans describe their decision to engage in volunteer work rather as a practical choice: because of their knowledge of the country, they consider themselves capable to do something in the area or help specific people. Nevertheless, participating in volunteer projects seems to be a fruitful way to stay involved with the region in a meaningful way. As such, memories about powerlessness and the impossibility to help others can be moved forward.

Getting a better understanding of the conflict—through volunteer work or by meeting locals—does not necessarily result in the development of an optimistic view on the country. Where veterans initially hope to witness peace and progress, and in that find proof of their own contribution to the region, the current political situation in Bosnia, and especially in the Bosnian-Serb Republika Srpska, is not that reassuring. Ethno-nationalist tensions are part of daily life for many Bosnian people. When talking to locals, veterans learn about these tensions, and are forced to adjust their desired image of the country. Take for example Dennis:

I only had terrible images of Sarajevo. And now you are nicely having dinner in the center of the city. Then you'll think: you see, it is possible. But yeah, then you'll talk to the girl that picked us up, who tells you that the reality is a bit different…
—Dennis, 46

Interestingly, although the knowledge of existing ethno-nationalist tensions might be regarded as disheartening, the veterans get over their first disappointment rather quickly. By gaining access to information about regional politics and tensions, they are able to update their knowledge of the country and the conflict, and have a better comprehension of the political situation in the country. Where there were initially two extreme storylines: one of Bosnia as a country of ongoing war, based on past experiences; and one of Bosnia as a country of beauty and progress, based on an outsider's hopes and desires, the newly created story is sobering, but also more nuanced, realistic, and believable. Being able to construct a story based on personal observations and interactions with locals

thereby contributes to developing a grounded opinion on the situation in the country and rewrites older storylines.

During their return trip, veterans open up their perspective on the country and the conflict. From an initial introspective scope, which focuses on processing individual memories and answering personal questions about experienced contrast or dissonance, they move to a next phase of directing their view outwards. This new phase enables veterans to recount their wartime experiences to friends and family members and show them the reasons for the changes they went through after returning from the deployment. By meeting locals and former adversaries, veterans learn about the experiences of others and develop insight in the larger story of the conflict. By engaging in volunteer work, veterans get involved with the country and find significance in contributing to smaller or larger projects. Years after the deployment, their presence in the area becomes more meaningful.

Still, the outward perspective brings on new tensions. Family members sometimes regard a veteran's recurring involvement with Bosnia as an unhealthy obsession. Participating in a return trip is in some cases burdensome for family members. Meanwhile, developing insight in the current political situation in Bosnia might come along with frustration and anger. Yet, most veterans seem to prefer this sobering storyline to their prior uninformed optimism.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the incentive to return can be found in the difficulties that veterans have in assigning positive meaning to their deployment in former Yugoslavia. This absence of positive meaning is caused by specific characteristics of war, that are sometimes related to war in general and at other times particular to the mission to former Yugoslavia (Schok, Kleber & Boeije, 2010). Wartime experiences of contrast, dissonance and unreality give rise to questions that are difficult to answer, especially after having returned home. The negative (inter)national collective narrative about the Dutch presence in former Yugoslavia has thereby intensified feelings of alienation and incomprehension. This has caused veterans to remain silent after their return home (Molendijk, 2020). In general, pre-existing cultural narratives help compose a veterans' story about a war and help to make sense of war experiences. But when those narratives are unfitting or absent—as seems to be the case with the interviewed veterans—it becomes difficult to construct a personal story about the war, and consequently, process associated experiences in a meaningful way (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper, 2000, p. 19). In the Netherlands, the negative public opinion about the missions, the media's focus on scandals, and the political attention solely for Srebrenica has further silenced the veterans. Because of this, veterans remain stuck with their memories of the deployment and questions about their experiences.

Returning to former places of deployment provides a way for veterans to build a new story about war experiences and find sense in them (cf. Dubisch, 2008, p. 320). The creation of such a story knows different phases. The first phase has an introspective character, in which returning veterans focus on personal questions and memories about the period of the deployment. Visits to tangible sites of the past are thought to provide the clues for answering these questions and redraw memories. Bodily and sensorial experiences therein take up an important position, especially when processing traumatic memories. The combination of cognitive, bodily and sensorial experiences that occur during the return trip seems crucial in making sense of memories—emotions or experiences that cannot be understood rationally, can but put into motion by physical encounters with personal places of memory. Interestingly, the analysis showed that revisiting general places of collective memory also allowed for emotional discharge. Here, we see how collective *lieux de mémoire* can also play a role in an individual's attempt to process the past—even when the personal war experiences of veterans are only loosely connected to the events commemorated by such collective places of memory. This finding indicates that visiting collective places of memory can also be a way to process highly personal memories.

The second phase knows a more outward directed perspective, where veterans open up to others: family members, friends, locals and in some cases even former adversaries. These encounters assist in verbalizing the newly created story. Articulating the newly created stories and memories is important in gaining recognition for past suffering and incomprehension. Physical confrontations with Bosnian places thereby function as a way to confirm the veracity of personal stories and memories. Veterans who feel misunderstood at home use visits to physical sites in Bosnia as a way to validate their stories to family and friends. The outward perspective also encourages veterans to develop interest in the stories of others, in getting to know different sides of the conflict and in understanding the past and present conflicts in the region as a whole. Lastly, the development of such an outward perspective also seems to instigate a desire to help others: either through volunteer work or by assisting veterans who return for the first time. Obviously, the pace and transitions between the different phases vary for individual veterans, with some never entering the second phase at all.

This research raises two issues. First, articulating new stories about memories can be regarded as a way to transfer personal memories into a story that can

be shared with a larger group (Ashplant, Dawson & Roper, 2000, p. 20). The presence of a such a group influences the way veterans experience and recount the return trip. Returning is therefore a 'social memory practice' (Marschall, 2016, p. 6). This means that the story of the returning veteran becomes a cultural script—a script that is written with the assumed value of returning to personal places of memory in mind. Although veterans travel in different constellations and visit different places in Bosnia, their reflections on the benefits of the return trip are surprisingly similar. Here, we can see how cultural scripts are strengthened by current convictions about the benefits of meaningful war tourism and the added value of personal confrontations with bleak episodes of one's past. It is important to realize that because of this, deviant experiences of returning, especially the more negative ones, might not be articulated at all. Nevertheless, returning to Bosnia allows many veterans to dissociate from the stigmas that exist about the Dutch involvement in the military missions to former Yugoslavia and Bosnia.

Second, visiting places of personal memory is undoubtedly important for individual veterans, in particular for the ones who seek to process traumatic memories. Still, it appears that visits to Bosnian sites that are less associated with personal memory can also be of value for returning veterans. Visiting places that represent the Bosnian wars in a more general way also seem to invite veterans to discharge, contemplate, and build on their story. Those *lieux de mémoire* provide the spatial components that are often needed for reflection (Connerton, 2009). Likewise, the experience of being in a familiar landscape already brings veterans back to their mission and encourages them to start processing memories. Thus, although memory and place are closely connected, processing wartime experiences is not limited to visiting personal places of the past only. Rather, the dedication to spend time in Bosnia, to recall the past, and engage with the landscape and its inhabitants plays a role in this process as well. Places, then, function as the conductors that assist in working through the past.

The veteran return trip is a phenomenon that has received little academic attention. Yet, as I hope to have illustrated throughout this chapter, it seems to have potential as an (additional) method of processing wartime experiences, next to already existing therapeutic trajectories. This research has an exploratory character. More research is needed to solidify the conclusions. Comparisons with veterans of other military missions with a negative collective narrative (e.g., Vietnam, Rwanda) could help to get a better comprehension of the impact such a narrative has on veterans of different nationalities. Meanwhile, psychological research about the benefits of returning is necessary to know more about the psychological consequences of undertaking a return trip, and the potential

negative consequences it might have for some. This study did not focus on the effect of the presence of Dutch veterans on Bosnian survivors. Although all interviewed veterans are positive about their encounters with locals, more ethnographic research is needed to get a better understanding of the impact and possibilities of such encounters.

This chapter focused on personal memory tourism—tourism to sites that are meaningful to visitors because of their personal history with these places. To some, the use of the term tourism here might raise some eyebrows—in a context of guilt, shame and trauma, framing the return trips as touristic practices could feel somewhat off. Yet, as I hope to have shown throughout this chapter, the return trips contain a lot of elements that are also be found in war tourism such as a desire for 'authentic' experiences or the search for meaning. Moreover, the form of some of the return trips can be regarded as 'touristic'—for instance, when veterans combine visits to personal places of memory with a holiday to the Croatian coasts. In such forms, we see how known forms of tourism and more serious trips intersect. In the next chapter, I will move away from these visits to sites of personal significance, and instead focus on a group of visitors that explicitly seeks to establish an affective relation with former war sites. A theme that was already briefly touched upon in this chapter will be discussed in a more elaborate manner: the practice of doing volunteer work as part of war tourism.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMERS OF WAR: Affective volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe[1]

1. This text has been published as: S. Driessen. (2020). Summers of war: Affective volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe. *Tourism Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1812111. I slightly adjusted the text in order to stress the role of this study within the dissertation.

Introduction

Every August, a group of volunteers travels to the wooded hills of Tuscany, Italy. Secluded between trees and bushes, they settle in a historical farmhouse where they work and live together for two weeks. The house is not only a monument to traditional Tuscan farm life, but also knows a more unsettling history. In March 1944, as an act of retribution, fascist forces from Siena captured and executed nineteen partisan fighters, who had taken shelter in the farmhouse. The volunteers who come here dedicate their time to preserving the memory of these events, by working on the maintenance of the memorial site, and by learning about its history. At the end of the two weeks, they will do the same in Sant'Anna di Stazzema, the village where Nazi German Waffen SS killed more than 500 villagers and refugees in 1944 (Di Pasquale, 2012). These killings served as revenge for the assumed support of the villagers to the partisan resistance (Pezzino, 2011, p. 128). Here, the volunteers meet with survivors, historians and contemporary refugees, to connect the past to the present. As such, an important part of the summer camps consists of personal and direct contact with war history. By spending time at a former war site while doing physical work, meeting eyewitnesses and scrutinizing violent histories, the volunteers develop a specific, affective relationship with the site and its past.

Every year, volunteer summer camps like this one take place on various sites all over the world, like military cemeteries or war memorials. Volunteers of different ages and nationalities dedicate their free summer to work at places associated with war and death. Their work consists of maintaining monuments and war sites, cleaning, preserving and documenting cemeteries, or assisting war survivors with their daily chores. Most of the European summer camps are initiated by the Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP), a German organization with roots in the protestant peace movement and antifascist activism (Huener, 2001). Since the early 1960s, ARSP has been organizing volunteer projects, starting with one in Oświęcim (Auschwitz), Poland. Nowadays, around 25 summer camps take place each year, at locations such as St. Petersburg, Sarajevo, and Berlin. The costs of participation in these camps range from €40 to €130 for a two-week stay, depending on the participant's country of origin, and include food and excursions. The remaining costs are paid by the ARSP, which is funded by different institutions and organizations: the church, the German government, the EU, international volunteering organizations, and by individual donations and contributions as well.[2] Compared to the traditional

2 https://www.asf-ev.de/ueber-uns/organisation/finanzierung/

design of the ARSP summer camps, which focused on symbolic retribution and reconciliation, the current camps take a more international, humanist perspective. Next to the manual work and leisure activities, the summer camps are dedicated to studying the past and discussing contemporary issues like migration, memory politics and right-wing extremism. Thus, their goal is to educate participants about the effects and consequences of war and conflict in the past and present. This is done with workshops, discussions, encounters with eyewitnesses and descendants of war victims, and visits to memory sites. Although the camps are open to people of all ages and backgrounds, most of the participants and team leaders (who are involved in the creation of the daily program) are female, European, young adults. The camps can be regarded as an expression of a contemporary form of war tourism, which consists of the development of a personal, affective and immersive approach to visiting, learning and volunteering on former war sites (e.g., Buda, 2015). In this chapter, I aim to shed light on the features of this specific form of contemporary war tourism and the narratives surrounding it. I do this by focusing in the motivations, experiences, and reflections of the summer camp participants. As such, I draw an image of the search for affective and impactful encounters with the past through war and volunteer tourism.

Research on war-themed, volunteer summer camps is limited. Besides Huener (2001), who discusses the ideology and politics of the ARSP from a top-down perspective, no recent studies have been conducted on this form of tourism. This raises questions about the present characteristics of the summer camps and their place within contemporary volunteer tourism to former war sites. Specifically, a bottom-up perspective could inform us about the way in which, nowadays, (young) European volunteer tourists engage with war history. Knowledge about volunteer tourism to former war sites helps to assess the potential value of war-themed summer camps as a means for historical and civic education through personal, tangible, and emotional encounters with the past.

Whereas the emotional responses of day tourists to former war sites have recently been examined (Biran, Poria & Oren, 2011; Isaac et al, 2017; Nawijn & Fricke, 2015), less is known about tourists who spend a longer period at such places. In this chapter, I will provide insight into the emotions and affects evoked by this immersive tourist experience. By focusing on the time spent at a site, the contact with tangible remnants of war, and the affective responses of the volunteers, I will discuss the often complex and contradictory emotions and affects pertaining to this specific type of tourism. Debates about war and 'dark' tourism often have a moral and normative undertone that obscures deviant voices and experiences. By examining the personal experiences and emotions of volunteer tourists on war sites in-depth, I aim to give room to these experiences. Moreover, discussions about volunteer tourism often focus on the problematic dynamic of tourists from the global North who volunteer in the global South. Because these dynamics are less present in the ARSP summer camps, it is interesting to see which possible experiences of privilege, helping, or inequality arise in this specific case, and how these experiences affect the volunteers' self-image.

This chapter contributes to empirical research on emotion and affect in both volunteer and war tourism. The theoretical contribution of this study lies with nuancing existing ideas about the nature of volunteer, 'dark', and war tourism. Also, it broadens the understanding of the appeal of auratic traces of the past—and with auratic, I refer to Walter Benjamin's conceptualization of the aura as a distinctive quality of an object, artwork, or landscape, that refers to its (physical) uniqueness in a specific time and place (Benjamin, 1969, pp. 220–221).

The study is based on 26 in-depth interviews with participants of 3 summer camps that took place in in 2016 and 2017, in Italy, Lithuania, and France, and focused on conserving and maintaining former war sites. The camps were dedicated to different episodes of European war history: fascism and resistance in Italy, Jewish culture and the Holocaust in Lithuania, and migration in the Spanish civil war and the Second World War in the French-Spanish border area. What motivates participants to do volunteer work on former war sites? What kind of connection do they establish with the place and its history? Which emotions and affective experiences do they have, and how do these experiences relate to the development of a self-image?

Volunteer tourism: motivations and morality

Volunteer tourism is usually regarded as a popular form of 'alternative tourism'—a form of tourism that diverges from activities commonly associated with mass tourism (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007). Traditionally, the intention of 'alternative tourists' is explained as the urge to contribute to host countries and communities (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). As a subcategory of alternative tourism, volunteer tourism has been researched from various perspectives. Many studies focus on the motivations of the volunteers and the impact of the experience: why do they wish to volunteer abroad and what do they expect to obtain from their stay? The main motivations distinguished in these studies include the desire to contribute something somewhere (e.g., Conran, 2011; Koleth, 2014), the search for personal development and transformation (e.g., Wearing, 2001), the urge to learn, travel and have authentic experiences of a place (Sin, 2009)

and even the convenience of an organized holiday (Sin, 2009).

The impact of the volunteer experience has been discussed from two angles: the impact of the experience on the volunteer, and the impact on locals and communities in the host countries (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Sin, 2010). The impact on the volunteers is mostly seen as positive: through volunteering, volunteers develop social awareness, work on their international network and adapt a more activist attitude in their home country (McGehee & Santos, 2005). Yet, some volunteer experiences are characterized by feelings of powerlessness, forcing the volunteers to invent new strategies to deal with witnessed misery (Gius, 2015). The impact of the presence of volunteers in host countries is more ambivalent: while some communities are positive about the attention they receive from volunteers, it is questionable whether their work contributes something in a sustainable manner (Sin, 2010). Wishes of the volunteers might clash with the needs of local communities, and in the selection of the places, albeit well intended, volunteers are inclined to move to the places they think are the most in need, thereby leaving out other sites (Sin, 2010).

Some scholars regard volunteer tourism as a neoliberal phenomenon that reinforces power hierarchies, which turns the volunteer work into a commodified, neoliberal experience (Burrai, Mostafanezhad & Hannam, 2017; Conran, 2011; Germann Molz, 2017; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Other scholars argue for a related research perspective in which volunteer tourism, and especially its relationship with gender, 'race' and religion, is seen as an exponent of broader political, historical and cultural developments and discourses (Banyopadhyay & Patil, 2017). Yet, these perspectives have been criticized by some for being too normative or deterministic (Everingham, 2016). Everingham adopts a 'hopeful' approach to studying volunteer tourism, an approach in which the complexities, ambiguities and deviant experiences of volunteer tourism are recognized (p. 521, 523, 525). This call for more focus on individual, deviant and ambiguous touristic experiences is significant, as the exploration of possibilities, hopes, and imagination might open up new perspectives in tourism studies (Pritchard, Morgan & Ateljevic, 2011). Still, the critical and hopeful approaches are not direct opposites; they may, in my opinion, strengthen each other when investigating the diverse experiences of volunteer tourists.

Affective volunteer tourism to former war sites

Contemporary volunteer tourism is generated by the possibility of having personal, emotional and affective encounters and experiences. Volunteer tourists

are eager to undergo emotional experiences in order to provoke personal growth (Germann Molz, 2017). By putting themselves in situations designed for intimate encounters (Conran, 2011) and even cathartic responses (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), volunteer tourists hope to build on their personality and gain 'emotional capital' (Germann Molz, 2017, p. 340). Yet, these experiences predominantly apply to encounters with people, pain, or poverty in the global South. When thinking about confrontations with remnants of war and violence, different affects, emotions and experiences are at play. Nevertheless, visits to places associated with war and violence are often emotional (Martini & Buda, 2018; Nawijn et al, 2016). As such, the combination of volunteer and war tourism presents a relevant case for researching affect and emotion in tourism.

Koleth (2014) discusses the affective responses of volunteer tourists who visited Cambodia's war heritage. These trips served as excursions for the volunteers, who were working on activities like teaching and medicine. The confrontation with physical traces of horrific events caused the volunteers to develop a different attitude towards their work in Cambodia. Their initial idealism, roughly defined as 'I want to contribute to a better world', changed into a more immersed and realistic attitude, in which the limitations of volunteers' capacities to contribute to that better world were also included (Koleth, 2014, p. 688). As such, confrontations with tangible war history affected the volunteers' perspective on their work and self-image.

In the last decade, various researchers have studied the emotional responses of day tourists to former war sites. In their work on visitors to Auschwitz, Biran, Poria and Oren state that aspirations for emotional experiences formed a key part of the motivations of the tourists to visit the site, next to the desire to be educated (2011, p. 836). Nawijn and Fricke (2015) investigated the 'positive' and 'negative' emotional responses of visitors to the Neuengamme concentration camp memorial, and found that the 'negative' emotions (shock, sadness, anger) overshadowed the positive ones (fascination and positive surprise). 'Negative' emotions were also felt more intensely (p. 226). Although such a binary division of positive and negative emotions is questionable—feeling sad is not necessarily something negative—their study did find that day tourists were content with their visit, despite the 'negative' emotional experiences (p. 226). These results expose the complexity and ambiguity of emotional experiences undergone at former war sites, as well as the subjectivity of interpreting emotional experiences.

Studies like these illustrate that the desire to be affected is an important part of the volunteer and war tourists' motivation to visit a site. Yet, much remains unclear about the way these affective experiences are formed. Do tangible war sites indeed 'impress' feelings on their visitors (Buda, d'Hauteserre & Jonston,

2014, p. 108), or is affect rather created in the open-ended encounter between tourist and site (Everingham 2016, p. 525)? In what ways do previous experiences and socio-cultural contexts shape tourists' affective responses? Where earlier studies tend to discuss the experiences of day tourists, in this chapter, my focus is on tourists who spend a significant period on former war sites. As such, I intend to get a better understanding of the processes underlying these tourist experiences.

A discussion of affective volunteer tourism to former war sites brings up questions about terminology. These visits are often framed as a form of 'dark tourism' (Foley & Lennon, 1996). Tourism to sites related to twentieth-century conflicts, in particular, is studied from the perspective of 'dark tourism' (Light, 2017, p. 280). This has resulted in a large number of quite similar case studies about tourism to 'dark' locations (Light, 2017). Despite the popularity of the concept, its applicability has been questioned (e.g., Biran, Poria & Oren, 2011; Dunkley, Morgan & Westwood, 2011). Critiques of the concept include its lack of theoretical substantiation, its assumptions about the sensationalist and voyeuristic attraction of death and disaster, its minor differences from 'heritage tourism', and its normativity (Light, 2017). For these reasons, I will refer to 'war tourism'; although this is a rather descriptive concept, it allows me to explore a wider range of (emotional) experiences than the typical 'dark' tourist ones, which are framed by the morbid attraction of everything that is assumed to be 'dark'.

Conceptualizing affect and emotion

The recent 'affective turn' in tourism studies has brought forward a cluster of research that focuses on the emotional and affective responses of visitors to former war sites, some of which has been discussed above. Emotion and affect have only recently been included in tourism research, and applicable theories of emotion and affect are in development (Buda, 2015, p. 25–29; Martini & Buda, 2018). When discussing affect and emotion in tourism, scholars rely on studies done within a broad range of scientific fields, such as critical theory, feminist studies, geography, psychology or neuroscience. A main point for discussion is the difference between affect and emotion. While some scholars see little need to differentiate between affect and emotion (see Gorton, 2007, p. 334), others underline the necessity of separating the two notions (Massumi, 1995, p. 88). Massumi regards affect as an 'intensity', while emotion serves as a 'qualified intensity'. In his view, 'affect' is abstract and autonomous, while 'emotion' refers to affect in its cultivated, subjective state (p. 88). Massumi's approach to affect and emotion can be associated with a Deleuzian perspective on affect, in which affect involves a

certain transition from one phase to another. Here, affect is also seen as an intensity, yet an intensity that takes form in movement (Thrift, 2009, p. 83). Affect thereby pertains to impersonal and unexpressed experiences—that are nevertheless corporeal—while emotions can be regarded as the personal, social and cultural expressions of these experiences (see Probyn, as quoted in Gorton, 2007).

Instead of concentrating on the exact differences between the notions of affect and emotions, other scholars study emotions and affect from a performative point of view. Ahmed famously argued for asking "what emotions do, instead of what they are" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 4). In her work, Ahmed not only emphasizes the quality of emotions as cultural practices, which are shaped in contact with others (p. 10), but also discusses how hierarchy, power and privilege are inherent to the possibility of being emotional (pp. 2–4). As such, they have the power to in- and exclude (groups of) people. In a similar way, Berlant takes a performative approach to studying collective, social and political manifestations of affect. In her work on compassion, she defines the term compassion as 'an emotion in operation' (Berlant, 2004, p. 4). This approach to defining compassion does allow us to ask what compassion does, how it operates within power structures, and how it manifests itself within different contexts. Thus, the attention Ahmed and Berlant pay to the performative quality of emotions assists in conceptualizing emotions as situated and cultivated practices that are constituted by power relations and social discourses.

I look at the aforementioned popularity of experience-oriented, emotional and affective volunteer tourism in the light of these arguments. When considering volunteer tourism to former war sites as an expression of a contemporary desire to be touched, a performative approach to studying emotion and affect helps to locate and understand the social, cultural and political components that instigate this desire. By focusing on what emotions 'do', it becomes possible to address their performative qualities on different levels. We can explore the ways in which emotions are shaped and reshaped during touristic encounters, and deepen our understanding of emotion and affect, as experienced in the specific socio-cultural setting of the volunteer summer camps.

Methods

This study is based on data obtained in interviews and during participant observation, conducted during three volunteer summer camps: one in Lithuania (2016), one in France (2017) and one in Italy (2017). I joined the 2017 camps, while a research assistant participated in the 2016 camp. Both of us signed up as

participants and joined all activities. During our weeklong stay, we conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 26 participants, including the team leaders. We wrote down field notes and had many more informal conversations. The three summer camps were selected because of their content and their variety in terms of location. This has resulted in a diverse sample in which the chosen camps address different facets of war: Jewish culture and the Holocaust in Lithuania; migration and refugees in France; ideology and violence in Italy.

The Lithuanian summer camp took place in Švenčionys, a small town on the north-east border with Belarus. During the Second World War, Nazi German troops built a ghetto in the town, where they captured and killed the Jewish residents living in the area or transported them to extermination camps. This resulted in the deaths of thousands of Jewish persons in the area (Arad, 2009). One of the remnants of the former presence of the Jewish community is an 18th-century cemetery at the edge of Švenčionys. Yet, the cemetery is neglected and now and then vandalized. ARSP volunteers spent two weeks at the cemetery, cleaning the vegetation off the tombstones and documenting the names of the deceased. According to Jewish burial tradition, the overgrown tombstones cannot be moved and are left to nature, which evokes a romantic atmosphere.

In France, volunteers stayed at a 12th-century monumental priory in the eastern Pyrenees. Under the guidance of a specialist, they worked on the dry-stone walls that protect the monument, by first dissecting the old and collapsed walls, and then rebuilding them. Whereas the volunteer work in Lithuania was directly connected to the place we stayed at, this was different in France, as the priory did not have a clear connection with refugees of either the Spanish civil war or the Second World War. Still, the connection with history was sought by hiking along routes in the mountainous area that had been used by refugees. Among these routes was the Walter Benjamin trail, a trail that follows the route that Benjamin took on his attempt to cross the French-Spanish border in preparation of an escape to the USA—an attempt that ended with his death in the Spanish border town Portbou, where he is also buried. The trail ends at a memorial dedicated to Benjamin.

The Italian summer camp took place at two different sites in Tuscany. The first site was the aforementioned old farmhouse, not far from Siena, which was used as a partisan shelter during the Second World War. Nowadays, the house serves as a monument to the partisans who were captured and executed by the fascist militia. During the summer camp, the volunteers worked on the preservation of the house by doing light manual work. The second site was the village of Sant'Anna di Stazzema, where volunteers studied the history of the village and met with Italian relatives of the victims of the Waffen SS.

All interviews took place during the summer camps, had an average duration of 45 minutes, and were conducted in English. The participants could choose the location of the interview. Thus, we were able to interview in a setting that was comfortable for the interviewee. Meanwhile, this also allowed us to speak about the motivation for selecting a specific place, which generated knowledge about the reasons for feeling at ease on specific spots on site. The interviews were based on an interview guide that contained questions about the motivation to join a summer camp, expectations, the meaning of the (local) historical events to the participants, working with tangible history, emotional responses, as well as the personal developments that took place during the camp. Semi-structured interviewing allows for flexibility while at the same time preserving the coverage of all designated topics (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Such flexibility was necessary in order to adapt to the different phases the volunteers were in: from a more forward-looking perspective during the first days of the camps to a more reflective stance during the later days.

All 26 interviews have been recorded and transcribed verbatim. All participants consented to collaborate in this study, and the project was approved by the ethics committee. The persons who wished to preserve their anonymity were assigned a pseudonym. We have analyzed the transcripts and field notes with an inductive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through different rounds of open and selective coding, four different themes have been found, that I will elaborate on below. During the analysis, specific attention has been paid to deviating voices, by contrasting individual stories to existing narratives of war and volunteer tourism.

Unavoidably, this study knows limitations. English was not the native language of any of the interviewees, nor of the interviewers, who are Dutch and Moldovan. Though the interviewees' level of English differed, most of them were able to express themselves well. Still, two of the interviewees mentioned at the end of the interview, that they would have liked to tell more but had been unable to, because of the language barrier. While our presence during the summer camps provided us with a frame of reference that allowed us to partially overcome these language issues, the interview answers should be regarded as being produced in a setting that is neither a reflection of daily life nor a completely artificial setting (Michael, 2017, p. 35). The interviewees were primarily highly educated German women in their twenties. Although this demographic is similar to the population of the ARSP summer camps, the results have to be read with this in mind. Additionally, our presence during the camps and our openness about our purposes might have influenced the group dynamics. However, there are many benefits to such an immersive approach: it is not only easier to interview

in the setting of the camps and get back to specific topics at a later moment, but it also facilitates observation of whether the interviewees' attitude and behavior during the camp matched their answers. Most importantly, by participating in the camp, we gained an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding that was beneficial when speaking about difficult topics.

Analysis

Motivations, attitudes, and (moral) responses

When looking at the motivations of summer camp volunteers, two types of volunteers can be discerned. The majority of the participants signs up for the camp because of an interest in history, but without any specific concern for the country or the wartime event. For them, the camp's value lies in increasing their historical knowledge, in meeting new people, and in doing something good in general. Then, there is a smaller group of people with a specific interest in the history of the site. Most of these volunteers have had earlier experiences with working on former war sites and memorials, either by participating in a previous summer camp or by engaging in a long-term volunteer project.

An important part of the motivation to join a volunteer summer camp is formed by the desire to have an impact, to contribute something of value to a society or community. During the interviews, this desire to have an impact through volunteer work surfaced often. Working hard and doing important work was a main incentive for all participants. This echoes the results of earlier studies on volunteer tourism (e.g., Conran, 2011; Koleth, 2014). Some interviewees also regard the reactions of the communities they are supporting as a valuable aspect of their work. Yet, not everyone spoke about such a need for recognition. Maike talked about the way in which she dealt with her initial urge to focus on personal achievements during the work:

> *And for example, at first, I, kind of stupid but I... The first three or four stones I cleaned, I actually counted them, and then I was like "Wait, that's absolutely not what it's about," like saying that I cleaned like 150 gravestones or anything, and I was just like "No, that would make it, like kind of a proud or self-righteous thing, a bit." So, at some point I was like "No, I don't... that's not how I want to do it, I want to be here and do this work and be here in the moment."*
> *—Maike, 25, Germany*

Maike's remark contains a question that many of the volunteers struggled with: what attitude should you adopt as a volunteer? Should you focus on doing hard and impactful work, on the effect the work has on others, or is it better to focus on your personal state of mind? These questions about attitude are coming from conflicting expectations about the impact of the work and disappointment about the actual amount and quality (Gius, 2015). Many participants had higher expectations, both in terms of impact and in terms of the time spent on the volunteer work. For Miri, the limited possibility to work during the summer camp even resulted in feelings of guilt:

> *I don't feel like, that's one thing I'm not feeling good about, that I don't work that much, (…) and also I get food, and I can stay here for free, and I don't feel that I'm giving enough back.*
> *—Miri, 22, Germany*

Miri clearly worried about the idea of reciprocity. She wanted to do something in return for her stay in Italy but had no insight into the way the ARSP pays for the stay of volunteers. Other participants, too, mentioned that they would have liked to work more, so as to feel better about their cheap stay. Interestingly, where doing volunteer work is sometimes seen as a way to deal with feelings of guilt about experienced privilege (Germann Molz, 2017), involvement in an ARSP summer camp did not resolve such guilt. Instead, participation made the volunteers conscious of the commodified character of the summer camps and volunteer work in general. Such consciousness caused discomfort with the experience as a whole. It was strengthened by feelings of uneasiness about the nature of war tourism (see Gius, 2015, p. 1626). When participants experienced that the logic of giving and paying back did not work out for them, they were confronted with their position as war tourists, and the societal discourse of sensationalism and voyeurism that surrounds this form of tourism (Buda & McIntosh, 2013). Additionally, feelings of disappointment and guilt were reinforced by the original aim of the ARSP to have German volunteers doing work on war sites affected by Nazi German aggression, as a symbolic means of reconciliation and reparation: when confronted with the futile character of such reparations, participants feel powerless. Moreover, for some of the volunteers, a general sense of shame and guilt about Germany's war history played a role as well.

Still, feelings of disappointment and guilt did cause the volunteers to turn away from the summer camps. Instead, such feelings made participants re-evaluate their initial expectations, adjust attitudes, and search for different

ways to make the camp relevant to them. Gius (2015) names three strategies for the re-evaluation and legitimization of a volunteers' presence abroad: 'the sympathetic response', 'the overturn' and 'taking charge'. The 'sympathetic response' implies a focus on the establishment of emotional relationships with communities and the gratitude of these communities towards the volunteers. This sympathetic response is visible in the volunteers who emphasize the gratitude of local communities. The 'overturn' and 'taking charge' strategies entail a shift in focus to the volunteers' personal development and agency, either through emotional growth (e.g., Germann Molz, 2017; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), or by employing a more activist attitude in the home country (e.g., McGehee & Santos, 2005). In both cases, the volunteers have accepted their position as spectators of suffering (Gius 2015, p. 1627). In the case of the summer camp volunteers, these strategies are discernible, too, but with a stronger focus on increasing one's historical knowledge and the search for personal connections with the past.

Personal connections and identification

Besides the manual work, an important part of the summer camps is dedicated to studying the (war) history of the sites the volunteers visit and stay at. As mentioned, many participants join the camps because of a general interest in history. Yet, some volunteers said that their personal background had also influenced their motivation to join. Franziska, for example, a 29-year-old German volunteer, explained her interest in war history as rooted in frustrations about the non-political household she grew up in. Because of the absence of a political attitude within her family, Franziska has assigned herself the task of paying attention to the life stories of others. It is not only important for Franziska to do volunteer work on war heritage sites, but also to pass her story on to people who come from a similar situation and show them that it is possible to disengage from one's background. In doing so, she articulates a moral understanding of the volunteer experience (Burrai, Mostafanezhad & Hannam, 2017).

For many participants, such a connection between one's personal background and the history of a country or region shaped their experience of the summer camp. Obviously, because of the different backgrounds of the participants, the way this connection is sought and established differs, and ranges from highly political or activist to more imaginary. In some cases, however, identification with historical events also caused tensions. Some volunteers explicitly mention that they experienced difficulties with their identification as German citizens and the history of the Second World War. They indicated that their choice to join a summer camp about Italian fascism was rooted in the desire to not be confronted with their German background in any explicit way. As Lisa told the interviewer:

Yeah, I think that's the reason, it's overwhelming and here [in Italy] you can deal with it, and you're not personally affected. In a way, you are personally affected when you are German and going to Auschwitz, in a way. You are, you know? (...) I think I could never stand to go to Auschwitz, actually, because I don't know, I just, I'd just cry all the time, actually. I don't know that it would deepen my knowledge of this history.
—Lisa, 27, Germany

Where a visit to Auschwitz would only result in an overwhelming, yet unproductive, emotional experience, studying fascism from an Italian point of view allowed her to distance herself. Hence, where for some of the participants a connection with their (national) past served as a means to make studying the past relevant to them and 'take charge', others expected to experience such a connection as being too confronting. For them, visiting war crime sites as a citizen of the perpetrating country is seen as too burdensome. This exposes an interesting dynamic in relation to what Boltanski (1999) has called 'distant suffering'—the assumed (mediatized) attraction of the simple, far-away suffering of others. A similar logic is often found in 'dark tourism' research (e.g., Stone, 2009). Yet, such logic does not seem to apply here. On the one hand, Lisa indeed seems to be looking for an impersonal confrontation with war history. On the other hand, this confrontation is her only way to deal with her national background and (learned) feelings of guilt. Rather than being 'attracted' by the suffering of others, learning about this suffering allows her to access and reflect on her personal situation. Here, less personal emotional responses to confrontations with war history seem to be more productive than the very personal and overwhelming ones. As such, here we could see the difference between the desire for an emotional response and an affective response to visiting a former war site.

Experiencing sites of conflict

Identification with past events functions as a means to make the volunteering and the study of the past more relevant to the participants. Yet, staying on a tangible war site also gives rise to specific experiences. Places associated with war and conflicts are thought to impress specific experiences on their visitors (Buda, d'Hauteserre & Jonston, 2014). The confrontation with material and

'authentic' traces of the past is thereby seen as auratic (Jones, 2010, p. 189). Seeing and touching material remnants of the past, with all their references to earlier times and users, causes people to establish personal relationships with those remnants and the networks they belong to (p. 181). As such, material objects serve as points of connection within larger networks that help persons to reflect on themselves. Furthermore, auratic experiences of 'authenticity' are closely connected to affect (Carter, 2019). Visitors are inclined to be affected by auratic experiences of places, objects or people: through these experiences, long-lasting memories of places and encounters are created (p. 312). Hence, on-site experiences and emotions are created in a negotiation between the site, its network and the visitor, and have the potential to create long-lasting memories of specific places and encounters.

According to all interviewees, staying on a tangible site provided something extra to their experience and increased their knowledge about the past, precisely because of the physical closeness of the past. Again, the proximity of historical traces allows for making war history more personal, emotional and memorable. Jacob explained how this worked for him:

> *Yeah, you know, and you feel somehow... people are buried here and they're... all of them have a history and personality and it's not just a number… Like, usually when you read about the Holocaust it's just numbers… So you have one grave—that's one person, that's one life... So, for example, this cemetery has around, like, 2000 tomb stones, and in comparison to the numbers you normally hear, it's quite a small number. But if you're at the cemetery and see that it's a big area, territory, you… you... it's more individual.*
> *—Jacob, 22, Germany*

Many interviewees had experiences similar to those of Jacob. Contact with physical traces of the past caused them to think about individuals who lived in the past and 'feel' their presence. Traces of their lives, such as a name on a gravestone, thereby function as triggers of their imagination. Even volunteers who were located on sites with fewer historical traces, still felt encouraged to use their imagination. For instance, the summer camp in France took place in a 12th-century priory. However, this specific site had nothing to do with refugees in the Spanish civil war and the Second World War, the topics of the camp. Here, it was only an indistinct mountainous landscape that referred to refugee routes in those wars. Lisa, a 20-year-old German student, talked about how she was still able to imagine the past on this site:

> *Even though you don't see anything at all, it's just the imagination that makes you understand a little more what this, the people's situation was...*
> *—Lisa, 20, Germany*

Like Lisa, many interviewees were convinced that a visit to a former war site makes the past more real and more understandable. This image of the past is mainly about obtaining information that is not present in a history book, details that seem too unimportant or too common to write about. By seeing the consequences of past violence, it is easier to believe that such violence took place. Importantly, it is not only seeing these consequences that matters, but also feeling them. Desislava explained:

> *We visited Sant'Anna, the city that's been burnt down, where everyone was killed and so on. And you go and you see it with your own eyes, because even now people aren't living there. There are not, not some, it's like a dead city. And then you see what it really means that everyone was killed, because if so many people have been killed, it doesn't matter how many years ago, still - like, it's empty. You get the feeling.*
> *—Desislava, 22, Bulgaria*

In Desislava's account, a corporeal understanding of the events at Sant'Anna is present. This understanding is not directed at the committed crimes, but rather at the consequences of these crimes. By visiting a village that still breathes a feeling of violence because of its emptiness, Desislava affectively understood what happened to the place. The time spent on site plays a role in this: by gradually learning about a place, and by discovering more and more details on site, the past becomes more real and, as a consequence, more emotional. As such, an affective relationship with the past is developed in phases, and new layers of emotions, feelings, reflections and memories are continuously added to the experience.

Encounters with physical remnants of the past 'do' something to the visitors. They work on their imagination, even if those remnants are mainly geographical, and help them to understand and remember specific histories better. The shared belief in the fact that physical remnants contain traces to a more realistic past is fascinating. Lisa's description of how an indistinct landscape triggered her historical imagination illustrates that, at least in her case, not many historical remnants are needed to invoke an image of the past. Here, it is rather a series of personal and cultivated associations that make up this image of the past (Jones, 2008). 'Auratic' experiences seem less important, at least for Lisa. Still, this does not undermine the (affective) power of seeing and feeling the consequences of

war and violence on site—for many other volunteers, the encounters with auratic traces of the past were, indeed, powerful and affective. An important factor that impacts the experience of the volunteers is the period of time spent at a war site. By being confronted with the same site for a long(er) period than a few hours, the emotional and affective responses of the volunteers become more layered. Importantly, such a longer period of time spent on site sometimes also results in the development of more contradictory experiences. As we will see in the next section, this also has consequences for the volunteers' behavior during the summer camp and their reflection on their experiences.

Feeling (un)touched

One of the reasons participants join war-themed summer camps is to search for emotional experiences. They want to be touched by stories about events that occurred in the past. This desire for affective experiences was noticeable, for example, in the way in which some of the participants reflected on the historical explanations we obtained. They emphasized that these explanations were nice but did not make them 'feel' anything, even though they were expressed on the site where the historical events took place. The way participants spoke about encounters that were more personal, such as meeting different eyewitnesses and survivors of the Second World War, revealed that they valued these experiences the most, precisely because they said to have 'felt' something. The same goes for visits to places of extreme violence, like the Rivesaltes transit camp in France or the village of Sant'Anna di Stazzema in Italy. Sites with strong symbolic meaning were also said to be highly affective. Hence, for the participants, 'feeling' something is a key element in the evaluation of their experience, and such feelings are more easily obtained through personal encounters and confrontations with traces of and references to extreme violence.

When speaking about their affective responses to the places visited during the summer camps, interviewees often referred to earlier visits to other former war sites, with which they could compare their experience. Especially the German participants had been on quite a number of school visits. Miri spoke about how a trip to the former Stasi prison Hohenschönhausen in Berlin had affected her in a physical way:

> *We went there and it was horrible, it was like the worst place I've ever been to. I felt it [emphasis on felt], I felt it like everything in me like froze and wanted kind of like I wanted to make myself short and small, and I was in a really horrible setting, there was nothing horrible anymore there, sure there were the buildings, but they didn't, there was nobody like actually doing me any harm, but it felt like somebody would do that at the moment. I was scared it would happen like any second, and it was so bad that I actually had to leave and take a break.*
> *—Miri, 22, Germany*

Miri's description of the disturbing experience she had in Hohenschönhausen is a clear example of the bodily quality of affect, in this case in a quite literal sense, as Miri even felt she wanted to make herself small. Franziska, who took part in multiple summer camps, talked in a related way about how tremendously the Jewish cemetery she had to work on scared her. Yet, by returning to a similar cemetery years later, she had also experienced that her anxiety to work on such a site had disappeared:

> *I've, I've had different phases, let's say... Like four years back, I would be anxious about going to the cemetery, because it would confront me with death... And I hated that. (...) After one day or two, we ended up not working on the cemetery, but in their garden... I was so, so incredibly relieved about that, you can't imagine... (...) And last year, it kind of changed, last year I... It was such a beautiful work, we were such a nice team, so I was like sitting quietly on that cemetery, I would be like listening to music all the time, painting all day long... (...) It gave me like a really peaceful feeling being on the cemetery, so I kind of lost all the anxiety I had before...*
> *—Franziska, 29, Germany*

Hence, for Franziska, her repeated presence on a cemetery made her get used to being close to references to death and dying, and made her develop an attitude that allowed her to feel relaxed and peaceful. Again, the development of an affective relation with the work and the place occurred here in phases, and emotions changed because of earlier emotions. Importantly, Franziska mentioned the nice team she was part of during the second time she volunteered at a cemetery. Here, the attitude and emotional state of other members of the group of volunteers had an impact on how she felt at the cemetery and gave her a positive experience. Hence, group dynamics make up a significant part of the volunteer experience. Thus, while auratic experiences of the past are important to the volunteers, group dynamics have an equally important impact on the volunteer experience. Daniele, a 29-year-old volunteer from Italy, explicitly alluded to the fact that group processes play a role in the way emotions are transmitted on site:

Yeah, if you, if you go there, if you see where it happened... And it's important to do this experience in a group, I think that it can contribute to the transmission of emotion...
—Daniele, 29, Italy

Daniele was convinced that being in a group helps in getting feelings across, and as such make those feelings more intense. Moreover, Daniele regarded being emotional as something valuable, something that you want to happen. Yet, while Daniele had no difficulty feeling affected, others had much more problems with this, in which one might distinguish a mechanism of in- and exclusion (Buda, d'Hauteserre and Jonston, 2014). From my own observation, mentioning not to feel involved or affected incited negative judgment by some of the group members. Noteworthy, Miri, who was so impressed by her visit to the former Stasi prison, told me she had not felt much during the summer camp. Realizing that she was not affected as much as she had expected even troubled her at night:

On the second night [of the summer camp] I couldn't sleep well, because I thought about that, well, because it didn't bother me at all, and I kind of feel that because I expected to be feeling bad about it, and that was what was keeping me awake, because I kind of wanted it to bother me, but it didn't.
—Miri, 22, Germany

Worries about not feeling affected were present in the accounts of other interviewees too. While they expected to feel a great deal during the summer camp, reality was different. Some of the German volunteers mentioned that they felt extremely numb earlier on, due to their extensive German education about the Second World War, which had saturated them with historical information. Nele even related this saturation to her desire to learn about that war in a different, more personal way during the summer camp in Italy:

I don't know whether it's maybe because it doesn't seem to be so cruel in, in comparison to other things that happened in the World War. Or just, I mean, I heard a lot about some massacres and stuff in school, and also afterwards... It's maybe not that sensitive to me anymore. And then I thought maybe when I come here and see the places, that will change. But it, it doesn't seem like it's really here. I don't know, it, it doesn't seem to be very close.
—Nele, 21, Germany

Miri's and Nele's remarks about feeling untouched concerned the first week of the Italian summer camp, when the places associated with mass atrocity, such as the village of Sant'Anna, had not yet been visited. Still, their accounts reveal their struggle to deal with their unmet expectations. This struggle was confronting to them, as it gave rise once more to questions about their motivation and guilt about their incapacity to relate to 'smaller' histories of violence and death, histories less saturated with recognizable symbolic references to war and violence. Here, the unbalance in the dynamics of giving and taking as formed by the experience of volunteering at a former war site seems to be resurfacing, yet this time concentrating on absent emotional responses. As a consequence, a self-judgment is distinguishable, related to the preferred (or imposed) reaction to being part of a war-themed summer camp. However, as was the case with the question of the desired impact of the work, the inner debates also caused some volunteers to re-evaluate their motivation, adjust their attitude, and shift their focus (e.g., Gius, 2015; Koleth, 2014). Such shifts in focus took the form of obtaining historical knowledge and focusing on the beauty of a site, separated from its history. This resulted, for example, in lyrical descriptions of the Lithuanian cemetery as beautiful, magical or romantic, or in developing a caring relationship with the partisan refuge in Italy. Therefore, the volunteers were able to create a more layered narrative about the sites and their experience of the summer camp. Here, we see the impact of a longer stay at a former war site. By having the time to explore, reflect, and re-evaluate one's expectations and experiences, different stories are created—stories that surpass the traditional narrative of the 'dark' or war tourist.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the motivations, expectations, and emotional experiences of volunteer tourists who participated in war-themed summer camps at different European locations. I focused on the different forms and outcomes of emotion and affect, as generated within a specific socio-cultural context. As argued, volunteers join war-themed summer camps in search of emotional experiences. They hope to find these experiences by employing a personal, embodied and located approach to studying the past. The ARSP summer camps provide a framework for combining this urge for emotional experiences with the possibility to do something in return: volunteer work. As such, participants can symbolically pay for their stay, education and experiences. The unmet expectations about the impact of the volunteer work reveal that for a part of the participants, this

logic of a symbolic payback did not work out. Still, witnessing the limited impact of the work did something to the participants: it made them re-evaluate their motives and expectations, and made them think critically about this form of volunteer tourism. Volunteers found new ways to relate to volunteering after having witnessed places of (former) suffering, either by becoming more realistic in their expectations about having a significant impact, or by shifting their attention to their personal development and identity building. This is in line with the findings of Gius (2015) and Koleth (2014).

With regard to the sought emotional experiences, a similar process took place. Once volunteers realized they remained untouched by a local history, they began to deliberate on their urge to be affected and started to look for different ways to make the summer camp meaningful to them. In both cases, confrontations with unfulfilled expectations and desires could be regarded as moments of personal growth, and in that sense, as a positive consequence of the volunteer tourist experience. Still, not everyone wants to be overwhelmed by war history: sometimes, distancing oneself from one's personal and socio-cultural background is more productive. Here, we see a difference between the desire to be emotionally touched and the desire to be affected.

Auratic experiences of place are closely linked to affect (Carter, 2019). And indeed, the volunteers regarded the tangible encounters with traces of war as an opportunity to be affected or emotionally touched. This research indicates that personal expectations, cultural codes, the design of the site, as well as group dynamics play an important role in the volunteers' emotional experiences. Hence, research about affect and emotion needs to take these dynamics into account. Moreover, studies on visitors to former war sites predominantly discuss day tourists who only spend a few hours on site (e.g., Biran, Poria, & Oren, 2011). This study shows that the time spent on site has a considerable impact on the tourist experience; thus, it is an important factor in research on tourists' emotional and affective responses.

This study includes a limited number of summer camps, organized by a single German organization. To gain a better understanding about this particular type of tourism, further empirical research should focus specifically on its relation to emotion and affect. Longitudinal research would be necessary to gain more insight into the impact of the summer camps on the lives of the volunteers, their self-image and their experiences of privilege. In addition, studies about the influence of the presence of volunteers on local (mnemonic) communities could add to the understanding of the impact of the summer camps on a local level. As experienced emotions are dependent on the cultural background of the participants, it would be interesting to conduct this research in different cultural settings.

A focus on 'what emotions do' makes it possible to expose various and deviant experiences of volunteer and war tourism. By paying attention to the processes that underlie individual tourist experiences, the possibility arises to explore the changes, complexities and ambiguities of emotional and affective experiences on former war sites. In the next chapter, I will address a form of war tourism in which such changes, ambiguities, and complexities emerge even more clearly: the Marš Mira.

CHAPTER 6

WALKING THE MARŠ MIRA: War, tourism, and ritual practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina[1]

1 This chapter will be published in revised form in P. Post, M. Barnard, M. Hoondert & M. Klomp (eds.). *Disaster rituals. Practices after disasters, crises, atrocities and violence* (2021, forthcoming).

Introduction

Every 8th of July, thousands of people join a seventy-five-kilometer march through the East-Bosnian countryside, called the Marš Mira (Peace March). In three days, the participants walk from the village of Nezuk to the genocide memorial center and cemetery in Potočari. During the march, participants follow the reversed route that the Bosnian Muslims living in the Srebrenica enclave took in 1995 in order to escape the Bosnian-Serb troops. Anticipating the fall of Srebrenica on the eleventh of July 1995, the majority of these refugees had taken shelter in the enclave attempted to flee to safer areas.[2] Guided by the members of the Bosnian army, thousands of refugees formed a column and tried to flee to safer grounds around Tuzla—a journey that forced them to cross territories held by the hostile Bosnian-Serb troops. When the Bosnian-Serb military spotted the column—which was obviously hard to miss—they decided to attack the column, and capture and kill the refugees. It is during this death march that most of the estimated 8,372 victims of the genocide were made.[3] Only a small part of the column managed to reach the safer areas around Tuzla, and some refugees arrived after months of walking and hiding in the mountains.

When survivors and relatives of the victims of the genocide initiated the Marš Mira in 2005, they tried to reconstruct the main route that refugees and army members took in 1995. Inevitably, when walking the route of the death march in reverse direction, participants pass by many places that bear the traces of the violence that took place during the war, such as mass graves and mine-fields. Sometimes the route-setters have explicitly chosen to include painful sites on the route. On the first day of the march, for example, marchers camp in the village of Liplje, where a concentration camp was located in the early days of the Bosnian war. It is also one of the many villages where women were raped during this time, and where multiple mass graves containing hundreds of bodies were found and exhumed after 1995.[4] On the last day, the march leads down-hill to Potočari, where both a cemetery and memorial center for the genocide can be found. In silence, participants of the march descend to the cemetery, and are welcomed by locals, the media, and the Bosnian army. The day after, the annual national commemoration of the genocide takes place on the same spot—a commemoration that many of the participants join as well.

2 The number of refugees circulates around 10,000–15,000. Data Potočari memorial and exhibition.
3 Data Potočari memorial and exhibition.
4 A report of these crimes can for example be found in the *ICTY public redacted version of judgement issued on 24 March 2016 (volume i of iv) – prosecutor vs Radovan Karadžić*, p 517; 2236–2239

During the Marš Mira, the participants perform a variety of ritual practices. From individual rituals that are performed on different places along the route and that are almost invisible to outsiders, to collective expressions of mourning or injustice, and everything in between. These rituals are performed in a context of war tourism. Which forms do these ritual practices take? And how do these practices relate to the practice of war tourism? In this chapter, I delve into these questions. In this final empirical chapter, I return to some of the theories and concepts that I discussed in the introduction, such as war tourism, the touristic gaze, and the desire for 'authentic' experiences.

For this research, I rely on the observations, encounters, and experiences I personally had during the marches of 2017 and 2018. Hence, this chapter will offer my personal perspective on my experiences of the Marš Mira—the perspective of an outsider to the Bosnian war. This perspective is also impacted by the research I have been doing on war and tourism as part of this dissertation project, and as such predominantly focuses on the touristic elements of the march. I realize that this means that other perspectives, most importantly that of the survivors and relatives, remain underexposed because of this approach.

To some, 'war tourism' might seem an inappropriate term with which to label the activities that are performed during the Marš Mira. Tourism is usually associated with entertainment, fun, and pleasure—terms not often connected to visits to places of war and conflict. However, as argued in earlier chapters of this study, it is questionable whether such associations with tourism are still adequate, because the nature of tourism has changed drastically over the last decades. The form and purpose of current tourism endeavors is highly diverse, and tourists may undertake trips for multiple reasons. These reasons surpass the search for entertainment, fun, and pleasure. As illustrated throughout this dissertation, nowadays, tourism is also undertaken for reasons of education, volunteering, or coping—reasons that can be linked to a search for meaningful touristic encounters (Cohen, 2011). This search for meaningful encounters implies that at least some people travel in order to enlarge their knowledge, grow personally, or even have transformative experiences. Moreover, although war tourism is not a new phenomenon (Baldwin & Sharpley, 2013; Butler & Suntikul 2013; Towner 2013), its popularity has been growing the last decades (Henderson 2000; Iles 2006; Scates 2002; Winter 2011).

Furthermore, tourism and ritual practices share some characteristics. Think for example of the importance of embodied experiences, of the social function of touristic rituals that take place outside daily routines, or of the possibility to recharge or transform by means of touristic or ritual practices (e.g., Grimes 2014; Wojtkowiak 2017). Touristic behavior on former war sites and memorials has

a ritual connotation that is informed by cultural traditions concerning ways to behave on these places of death and sorrow. Some tourism researchers even consider tourism a secular ritual that is an integral part of contemporary daily life (Edensor, 2001; MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 2007). And although not every participant of the Marš Mira will describe themselves as a tourist, some of the behavior performed during the march has a touristic dimension. This particularly applies to the participants without a strong personal connection to the events of 1995—people from 'outside' who are visitors to East-Bosnia.

Analyzing the Marš Mira and its participants from the perspective of war tourism enables me to address the tensions that are present within this particular form of tourism. Where other frames perspectives, such as those of 'pilgrims', 'commemorators", or 'activists', predominantly capture social and political desirable connotations related to people's motivations and behavior on former war sites, the frame of war tourism assists in addressing and nuancing the less accepted connotations as well, such as the search for adventure or experiences of voyeurism. Thus, I aim to draw a more diverse image of the Marš Mira and its participants.

Who are the participants of the Marš Mira? While the first editions of the march mainly had survivors and locals among its participants, nowadays the march knows a more diverse population, albeit predominantly male. The march is joined not only by direct survivors of the genocide (identifiable by a specific nametag), sympathizing civilian Bosnians from all over the country, and groups of Bosnian war veterans, but also by foreigners with a broad range of motives to participate: students who want to learn about the events, people from sympathizing Muslim countries who want to show their support, UN and NATO veterans who served in Bosnia in the 1990s, Turkish boy scouts, members of peace organizations, and more. I even met a German woman who participated because she hoped to heal the Bosnian soil spiritually. Hence, the population of the march is diverse, and people participate pursuing quite a variety of goals. Many participants explicitly express their commitment or personal background by means of visual statements. There are groups of men wearing the same shirts with information about their background, their organization or their purpose for participation. There are people carrying protest signs, and also, there are many different national flags being shown.

Besides such statements by individual participants, that are predominantly uttered to support the relatives of the victims and the Bosnian Muslim community, the organization of the march itself can be regarded as a political statement too. By walking through the hills of the Bosnian-Serb Republika Srpska (an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a Serb-nationalist political orientation),

for three days the landscape is inhabited by the people whose views on the Bosnian war are not accepted by its current government, which denies the genocide. "If walking sews together the land that ownership tears apart, then trespassing does so as a political statement", concludes Rebecca Solnit in her cultural history of walking (2014, p. 163). Therefore, walking on the land of others could serve as a means to make a political statement, and symbolically re-take what is assumed to be yours. Still, the current purpose of the march is not to heal the torn and divided landscape. The three days of trespassing are rather undertaken to allude to a narrative of Bosnian and Muslim victimhood (e.g., Hoondert 2018). Although the creation of such a narrative of victimhood might not have been the original aim of the initiators of the march, in its current form the march does not seem to be directed towards reconciliation between the different ethnic and religious groups in Bosnia.

Picturing the death march

Many of my memories of the Marš Mira have to do with the taking of pictures. Photography has always intrigued me because it is such an important part of touristic experiences. This has to do with the nature of tourism: tourism is traditionally described as an activity defined by the possibility to gaze upon worlds and scenes different than one's own (Urry & Larsen, p. 2011). Taking pictures therein plays an important role. As tourism implicates a "collection of signs" (Urry & Larsen, 2011, p. 4); photography allows tourists to create proof of their collected signs. Thereby, what tourists gaze upon and take pictures of is culturally mediated: the signs that are sought for by tourists are the signs that culture has taught them to search for (Urry & Larsen 2011; MacCannell, 1999). Thus, collecting proof of visited places in the form of images becomes a touristic ritual.

The times that I participated in the Marš Mira, I saw many pictures being taken. And indeed, I could recognize the spots that culture has taught us to look at: a grandfather sitting on the porch of his house, a sunset over the wooded hills, a beautiful mosque, many, very many cute-looking children, and the low-hanging fog that I will always associate with the East-Bosnian countryside. All these scenes were gazed at, photographed, and most likely, posted online. Clearly, phones and cameras are now part of the experience of marching, in such a way that some scenes only appeared to be consumed through the camera (Larsen, 2004, p. 161).

The picture taking was not limited to shooting idyllic scenes. Regardless of the horrible history of many places along the route, participants of the march did

not keep their phones and cameras shut away on these sites. During the three days of walking, I witnessed people posing in front of memorials, minefields and mass graves, of which the latter are accompanied by signs with graphic images of decomposed bodies. This visual signage has a clear purpose: because the (primary, secondary and even tertiary) mass graves are located in territories that are now part of the Republika Srpska, the signage serves as a means to acknowledge the crimes committed to the Bosnian-Muslim refugees in an area in which those crimes are officially denied. The photos of the decomposed bodies on the signs purposefully contain elements like chains, ropes, handcuffs and other indicators of force, in order to provide proof of the fact that the victims were killed in an organized genocide, and that they did not die fighting, as genocide-deniers claim. Hence, besides a commemorative function, these signs have a political goal too. This is an example of what has been called 'necropolitical activism': a way of "directing attention toward the remains of the dead as the reality of a history of repression and neglect" (Ruin, 2018, p. 111). These graphic images and fulfil a political purpose, and so does the act of photographing them.

For many people, the act of taking pictures of traces of horrifying events is difficult to grasp, and is condemned publicly (Light, 2017, p. 282; Stone, 2009, p. 58)—a well-known example is the 'Auschwitz selfie' (e.g., Grever, 2018). Moreover, the touristification of war sites is by some considered as potentially trivializing the history of such places (Causevic & Lynch 2011, p. 784). Thereby, tourists who visit sites of violence, death and mass atrocities are sometimes said to perform voyeuristic behavior (Buda & McIntosh, 2013; Schaller, 2007; Simic, 2009). This suggests that tourists find 'pleasure' in gazing at sites of death and suffering. Taking up a camera to shamelessly collect evidence of such joy is potentially even worse. Condemnations like these reverberate in the discourse of 'dark tourism', in which the touristic desire to visit places associated with death and suffering is explained in the light of a post-modern orientation on consumption, entertainment and spectacle (Foley & Lennon, 1996).

A growing number of researchers question the validity of criticism towards war tourists as voyeurs to death and suffering. For instance, in her study on tourism at Ground Zero, Debbie Lisle (2004, p. 5) states that the notion of voyeurism simplifies the complex characteristics of tourism to sites of war and conflict. The term voyeurism suggests passive tourists who engage in sole acts of looking. Voyeurism also implies a division between two worlds—the classic wall-with-peephole symbolizes the separation of the voyeur and the objects of voyeurism. Lisle disputes whether the tourists should actually be seen as such passive subjects, as their presence on Ground Zero seemed to affect them in various ways: they paid respect, reflected on their presence, and questioned

their potential voyeuristic behavior (p. 11). Moreover, the tourists explicitly made the choice to visit the site and formed an idea about what they would find at the destination even though they knew that the scene could be hard to watch (p. 17).

A similar response seemed to have happened to the participants of the Marš Mira. By talking to my fellow walkers, I learned that many of them struggled to find a 'proper' way to relate to the conflict and the many traces of death and suffering along the route—a struggle fed by societal debates about the morality of war tourism. This struggle developed gradually over the three days of the march—where the first day was mainly framed by excitement over being part of the march and seeing traces of war, in the later days, this excitement transformed into a more somber and contemplative atmosphere, especially when the traces of war proved to be abundant, and more stories about the past were told. Interestingly, over the three days of marching, many participants, including myself, developed a personal ritual, through which they sought for a way to deal with questions about the purpose of their presence at the Marš Mira, their potential voyeurism, or their relation to the victims. Photography played a role in this: I for instance noticed that once I had taken a picture of the first mass grave we passed, I felt obliged to take photos of all the other mass graves that followed, because why would only one mass grave deserve the attention of my camera? Here, taking up my camera as soon as we passed yet another mass grave became a way to deal with feelings of unease on these sites, and also, a way to keep distance. As such, it became a personal ritual, created in order to deal with feelings that were instigated by both the confrontation with atrocities and the confrontation with my presence on these sites—a ritual that took the form of an activity that we immediately associate with tourism: taking pictures.

Going all-in

While photography makes up a central part of the tourist experience, tourism is more than visual experiences alone. Embodied experiences of place—experiences that are informed by multiple senses—form another important feature of tourism. By not only seeing, but also feeling, smelling and hearing the different places along the route of the Marš Mira, participants are immersed in the East-Bosnian landscape. By means of spending three days of walking and camping along the route that the Bosnian refugees took in 1995, this immersion becomes even more substantial. During those three days and nights, every ruined house, trace of fire, gravestone or bullet hole along the route can be regarded as a marker for another story about a war time event. Janet Jacobs has written about the way the remaining houses in the Bosnian countryside look like tributes to the tragedies that have happened during the wars, "haunting buildings that foreground the memory of death that Srebrenica commemorates" (Jacobs, 2017, p. 427). Every trace along the road signals the tragedy that lies ahead at the end of the route. As such, the complete immersion in the war-torn landscape can be regarded as a form of embodied remembrance, that intensifies during the three days of walking, and culminates when entering the cemetery in Potočari.

Throughout the Marš Mira, immersive experiences were strongly desired for by the participants. In 2018, for instance, the people I was with did not camp along the route, but stayed over at a house in Srebrenica, and were driven back and forth to the start- and end points of the daily marches. Yet, some people of the group were not happy with this, as the daily commute to Srebrenica detached them from their immersive experience of the Marš Mira. In their eyes, it made the experience of the march less genuine and less authentic. Because of their desire for a complete immersion, they preferred the discomfort of the campsites—no warm food, a lot of noise, no showers, having to carry camping gear on your back all day—to a more comfortable stay at a house further away from the route.[5]

This response is not very surprising. The search for authentic experiences is seen as a key incentive for tourism (MacCannell, 1976). In her study of hikers on the Kokoda-trail—a 96-kilometer historical trail through the jungles of Papua New Guinea that was used by Australian military in the Second World War—Jo Hawkins (2013, p. 14) concludes that the hikers connected experiences of discomfort to a heightened sense of authenticity during the march (p. 14). By undergoing physical and mental challenges, the experience of hiking the track became more authentic, more emotional, and allowed for self-discovery. Moreover, when Hawkins asked tourists about their motivations to hike the Kokoda trail, 'adventure' was the most mentioned answer, prior to for example remembrance or learning about the past (p. 9). Rather than a means for mourning and commemorating the past, hiking the Kokoda trial was done in order to obtain self-knowledge, personal transformation, and social status.

During the Marš Mira, this urge for adventure and transformation was recognizable too. "I really just want to see if I will make it to the end of the route",

5 Camping at the official campsite also allows participants to take part in an evening program that is set up by the organization. This program contains speeches, prayers, and other kinds of performances. Also, documentaries about the war are being shown. The complete program is in Bosnian.

an American student told me when I asked her about her reasons to join the march. This is an example of how for some participants walking the march becomes a test, a way to challenge and strengthen ones physical and mental capacities. This focus on adventure and self-discovery was also noticeable in the stories that were told at night about the experiences of that day. In 2018, for instance, we encountered bad weather during the march, and many of the tracks were transformed into slippery slopes. The evening conversations of the participants revolved around exhaustion, dirt, or who had to pulled over the muddy hills by human chains of Bosnian men, and as such concerned the achievements of the participants under uncomfortable circumstances. Here, what these participants took home form their experience of walking the Marš Mira focused on the personal challenges that were overcome during the march.

Interestingly, while the confrontation with some 'touristic' behavior, like voyeurism, stimulated some participants to reflect on their behavior during the march, this did not seem to be the case with the desire for experiences of authenticity and immersion. This desire did not change during of the march, but even got stronger over the course of three days. I for example noticed that there was an urge to talk to local people about the war and its aftermath among non-Bosnian participants. Fulfilling this quest became a means to obtain a certain social status: if you had been invited for a talk, coffee, or lunch by local Bosnian people, you had succeeded in obtaining a more authentic, immersive and insider's experience of the march, and as such, had done better as a war tourist.

Different explanations can be given for this kind of behavior. It might originate in feelings of guilt, privilege, and discomfort that surface when being faced with the abundant traces of violence along the route (something that was also seen in the previous chapter)—feelings that stem from the confrontations with the suffering of others, and that are fed by a narrative of victimhood. Making a serious effort to completely immerse in the experience and talk with local people about their memories and experiences serves as a means to deal with these feelings. By enlarging one's knowledge about the conflict and by learning more about the stories of individuals, participants gain access to the conflict and feel less like privileged outsiders who did not have to go through a war. A similar reasoning applies to the reluctance to choose comfort over discomfort.

Another explanation might be valid too. As a commemorative ritual practice, the Marš Mira is a social happening. During the march, people walk, eat and camp together. On the last day, everyone waits for the slowest walkers before collectively starting with the descent to the cemetery in Potočari. Locals provide the participants with food, and volunteers assist the marchers with water and medical care along the route. The experience of 'being in this together' is

strong. By experiencing harshness together, a feeling of social cohesion is created. Because of the relatively large number of participants with a military background, for some, this feeling slightly resembles a military sense of comradery. Therefore, the desire for immersion might also be caused by social pressures—not going all-in during the march could be experienced as a violation of the solidarity among the walkers.

Concluding, going all-in is an important feature of the Marš Mira. The purpose of the march—commemorating the victims of the genocide in the area where much of the violence took place—adds a sense of significance, solidarity and social cohesion to the march. The combination of adventure, physical challenges, and the very serious undertone give the march a specific angle. The knowledge that the commemorated events happened in the recent past and that ethnic tensions still prevail in Bosnia, gives the march a sense of urgency. On the one hand, this knowledge feeds into one-sided narratives of the war. Yet, on the other hand, it might also encourage participants to experience personal development and self-realization. Although education about the wartime events and their consequences, from a Bosnian Muslim point of view, makes up another feature of the march, such education mainly takes place through the development of a personal engagement with the war and its victims. During the march, ritual practices are performed individually or in small groups, and are embedded in the touristic behavior on site. This changes when the participants reach the final stage of the march.

From tourism to commemoration

The final few hundred meters of the Marš Mira bring the thousands of participants to the memorial center in Potočari. These last meters mark the transition from a rather undefined zone of remembrance, tourism, political activism, and adventure, that persisted for the three days of the march, to a zone in which commemoration and contemplation clearly stand out. This is the moment when the Marš Mira intensifies and when collective ritual practices come to the fore. It is common practice to march this last leap in silence. Different groups of people, particularly the ones with a military background, prefer to walk this part of the march in formation, thereby alluding to military culture and military rituals. When entering the cemetery, the dirty, sunburnt and exhausted participants are welcomed by local people who are positioned on both sides of the road—people who have experienced the Bosnian war and its consequences personally. For the last part of their journey, the roles are reversed: after days of looking at traces

of the suffering of local Bosnians, the participants of the Marš Mira become the object to look at—at least for a while. A welcome shift, for sure, but for me this was also a difficult moment. For three days, I had been able to hide behind my position as a researcher, my academic gaze and my camera, at a safe distance from everything that happened during the peace march (Simic, 2009). But by entering Potočari under the eyes of war survivors, I felt pulled into the reality of the war and its aftermath. For me, this was the moment that my immersion in the Bosnian war history felt the strongest—I had become part of it and it was difficult to leave unaffected.

The end of the Marš Mira leads into the start of the official annual commemoration of the genocide on the 11th of July that is attended by thousands of people. The public part of this commemoration is a purely religious affair: an imam leads a prayer for the victims, after which the coffins with the remains of the bodies that have been identified that year are brought to their graves by family members. References to the Bosnian wars are absent during this ceremony. The commemoration is attended by Bosnians from all over the country as well as the diaspora. Also, international representatives and sympathizers take part in the commemoration. The 11th of July is the only day that Srebrenica and Potočari are flooded with people—the rest of the year the now predominantly Bosnian-Serb villages do not receive many visitors. During the march and the commemoration, I heard complaints about the insincerity of the national and international officials, who only come to the area on the day of the commemoration, but ignore it the rest of the year. This feeling of insincerity is strengthened by the fact that before the public commemoration another ceremony takes place, but is accessible for officials, diplomats, and invited guests only.

It has been argued that the Marš Mira can be regarded as a failed ritual, as it has become a non-inclusive and political event, despite its original intentions (Hoondert, 2018). This is unsurprising: in polarized Bosnia, there is no room for stories about the past that do not fit within one of the ethno-nationalist narratives, especially in the month of July. In Bosnia, the memorialization of the past is a political activity (Halilovich, 2011, p. 44). And, indeed, the Marš Mira can clearly be regarded as such a political activity that fits within the dominant Bosnian narrative of the war of the 1990s. The chances that this situation will soon change are low.

What, then, constitutes the value of the Marš Mira within this polarized memory culture? In order to come up with an answer to this question, it is necessary to point to the differences between the participants. For relatives and descendants of the victims, the march functions as a yearly commemorative

ritual. Participation serves as a means to cope or come to terms with their direct past. For them, the march is also a social gathering, where people catch up with friends and acquaintances. Moreover, the march is a moment to tell others about their memories of the Bosnian war in an environment that is for a few days very receptive to their stories. For these participants, the march seems to fulfil a clear purpose.[6] The same goes for other participants that have a close connection to the events—a journalist who documented life in Srebrenica before the fall of the enclave, a former red-cross employee who took care of refugees in Tuzla, or a Dutch un veteran who was deployed in Potočari in 1995. Yet, the majority of the participants of the march does not have such a clear-cut connection to the specific events that took place in the area during the war. For them, visiting these sites has a symbolic meaning, as Srebrenica and Potočari are the icons of the violence that took place in in wartime Bosnia. Confrontations with traces of the events that occurred in the past therefore have a referential function: they help to remind people of the consequences of human evil in general.

Looking at the march from a perspective of war tourism has shed light on its touristic features: the importance of the (voyeuristic) gaze and the camera as well as the search for immersion and authentic experiences. Sometimes, the confrontation with the 'touristic' features of the march caused participants to reflect on their own behavior, and as such, grow personally. At other times, walking through the East-Bosnian landscape might be a way to become engaged with the war and its victims, and learn about the past and its consequences in an embodied way. To return to Solnit: "Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world" (Solnit, 2014, p. 29). However, more often, the confrontation with traces of death and violence feeds into a politicized and polarized narrative of the Bosnian war. As such, the march has developed a possibly divisive character, and may be considered a failed ritual. Still, I would argue that on an individual level, the experienced emotions could form a starting point to learn about oneself, war, memory culture, and build a social identity. The concept of walking the 1995 death march in reversed route remains strong. As seen, the fact that it takes three days to complete the Marš Mira makes it possible to go through different stages and experiences: from adventure to contemplation to commemoration, and back. This stretched out timeframe, in my opinion, is an advantage, as it allows participants to now and then escape from the constraints of the ethno-nationalist

6 I say this as an outsider—more research is needed about the experiences of this group of participants.

narratives of victimhood. Still, a lot of progress needs to be made in order to transform the march into an inclusive ritual for everyone that participates.

This chapter on the Marš Mira is the last empirical study conducted for this dissertation—a chapter that has had a more personal tone than the others, as it is based on my own experiences and observations as a war tourist and secondary witness. Still, this personal analysis of the Marš Mira has also allowed me to return to some of the themes related to war tourism, as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, such as the tourist gaze, 'authenticity', and embodied experiences of place. I will return to these topics in the next and final chapter, the general conclusion.

CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have explored the phenomenon of war tourism. I have investigated the motivations, experiences, and reflections of different groups of visitors: military officers and cadets, veterans, volunteers, and participants of the Marš Mira. This allowed me to probe into the role and value of war tourism and heritage in today's society from a multisided perspective.

This dissertation started with the observation that the number of people that visit former war sites is surging. Iconic war sites, such as the Nazi German extermination camp Auschwitz, report receiving a growing number of visitors every year.[1] This growth in the number of visitors has not gone unattended. In recent decades, the number of studies about the phenomenon of war tourism has risen as well. These studies predominantly consider tourists who visit iconic war sites all over the world and focus on 'general' tourists, resulting in generic and often unsubstantiated conclusions regarding war tourism. This made me wonder about the experiences of those visitors that are less easy to label as tourists: visitors with an existing or desired personal connection to a past conflict. I believed that investigating these visitors would not only deepen our insight into their specific experiences, but might also tell us more about the diversifying forms and roles of war tourism and heritage in contemporary society.

Therefore, I expected that the focus on different groups of visitors would allow me to get a better comprehension of the impact of the visitors' sociocultural backgrounds on their experiences. Moreover, I reasoned that integrating theories on place, memory, authenticity, and secondary witnessing in the field of war tourism would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and the appeal of visiting former war sites. I believed that this approach could also result in a critical evaluation and refinement of existing theories on the motivation and experiences of war tourists.

The research question that has guided this research reads as follows: Why and how are different groups of people drawn to former war sites associated with twentieth-century conflicts in Europe? This question was supported by the following subquestions:

1. What motivates specific groups of people to visit former war sites and how do these groups experience their visit?
2. What meanings do specific groups of people ascribe to their visit and what processes of identification take place?

1 In 2019, Auschwitz received a record number of 2.3 million visitors. http://auschwitz.org/en/visiting/attendance

3. How do these personal motivations, experiences, and reflections connect to existing ideas on war tourism in Europe?

In order to answer these questions, I designed four empirical studies that focused on the motivation, experiences, and processes of meaning making and identification of different groups of visitors. As such, I was able to compare the results of the empirical studies and analyze the similarities and differences in the experiences of quite different groups of visitors. To limit the scope of this study, I decided to focus on sites related to twentieth-century conflicts in Europe. This focus on twentieth-century Europe has allowed me to research sites related to different major conflicts that take up an important position in the collective memory all over Europe. Nevertheless, the twentieth-century conflicts discussed are rather diverse—they range from 'traditional' static warfare between alliances of nations to wars between different ethnic groups. As such, these sites have different values for their visitors and can embody an almost romantic celebration of wartime heroism, but they can also be associated with severe trauma and loss. In practice, the focus on Europe has allowed me to take up an ethnographic approach, visit many sites myself, and observe their visitors. Moreover, because of choosing Europe my research assistant and me have been able to conduct all interviews face-to-face, which I deemed important when researching (potentially) sensitive topics. I have relied on qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews (the veterans), participant observation (the Marš Mira), or a combination of the two (the military and the volunteers). In total, the data set comprises 58 interviews, as well as observations and fieldnotes of three military battlefield tours, three war-themed summer camps, and two peace marches.

Throughout this dissertation, I have approached 'war tourism' as a phenomenon that revolves around the opportunity to engage with war memories and histories in an embodied, affective, and meaningful way. This means that ample attention has been given to discussing the different facets and layers that constitute visitors' experiences. In the four empirical case studies, I explored the experiences of different groups of visitors to sites associated with war and conflict: the military, veterans, volunteers, and peace marchers—visitors that seem to defy the label of 'war tourists' but who have a professional or (desired) personal connection to specific war sites. I studied these visitors' motivations, on-site experiences, and processes of meaning making and identification. Thus, I approached the experience of visiting a war site as an integral part in the lives of the visitors: an experience that is anticipated, lived through, and reflected upon, and whose consequences are sometimes only understood long after the experience took place.

In this final chapter, I present and discuss the conclusions that can be drawn from this dissertation. I start by summarizing the conclusions of the different empirical cases. Then I consider the general and synthesizing conclusions. Next, I discuss the general, theoretical and practical implications of this dissertation. Lastly, I provide recommendations for further research.

Results of the empirical case studies

Chapter 3, the first empirical chapter of this dissertation, was dedicated to military battlefield tours to former war sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France. These tours are predominantly undertaken for military educational purposes. Their relation to 'war tourism' is ambivalent, even though the term 'battlefield tours' might suggest differently. None of the military participants would describe themselves as a war tourist, and the practice takes place in a professional context. In the chapter, I focused on the way Dutch officers and cadets experienced battlefield tours and on the tensions that can be observed between the goals of the trips and the experiences of the individual participants. Throughout the chapter, I have shown that the battlefield tours helped Dutch officers and cadets to develop a specific place-bound engagement with the past. I argued that the historical landscape thereby provided external clues and arguments that assisted the participants in comprehending the course of a historical event. Moreover, the aura of 'authenticity' present on site proved to be important during the battlefield tours, as it made the presented history seem more believable and understandable. The myriad details present on site told stories that seem difficult to convey in history books, and—most of the time—helped the military visitors to achieve a more layered and complex image of the past. Also, the visual and sensual triggers at a historical site allowed for cognitive and bodily knowledge and appealed to the participants' imagination. The study indicated that the (historical) knowledge and cultural background of the participants impacted to a great extent the way they imagined the past. Personal background and interests also impacted the participants' attempts to actively work with their imagination on site. An interesting difference was observed between the experience of visiting former battlefields, which were sometimes quite indistinct, and the experience of visiting the more cultivated war cemeteries. Where the former mainly served an educational purpose and did not appeal to everyone, the latter gave rise to emotions or feelings of connection to the past with most of the visitors. For example, when trying to understand the emotional impact and consequences of warfare, several participants felt

connected to past actors, which sometimes generated dilemmas. These specific dilemmas seem particular to active members of the military, and did not return in the other case studies in this way.

In Chapter 4, I studied Dutch veterans who returned to places related to their military deployment in former Yugoslavia, investigating the motivations, experiences, and processes of meaning making of the Dutch veterans who have returned to the area. The motivation of the returning veterans should be seen in the light of a long process of trying to come to terms with their personal history. I concluded that veterans experienced difficulties in processing their memories of the deployment, because of the negative public reception and media coverage of the Dutch military involvement in former Yugoslavia, which is characterized by the failed protection of the Bosnian-Muslim enclave around Srebrenica and the consequent genocide. By returning to the places that were important to them during the mission, veterans hoped to find meaning in their wartime experiences. Visits to sites related to their deployment assisted in answering the questions they had remaining about the war and in moving their story forward. Physically experiencing these sites therefore served as a way to access personal memories. The conviction that 'authentic' places of the past hold a certain truth about that past was present among the returning veterans, just like it was with the military battlefield tours. Yet, the origins of this conviction differed: whereas the cadets and officers engaged in battlefield tours because they seemed to add something extra to an educational program or military exercise, many veterans returned to former Yugoslavia because of a strong personal need—they had experienced difficulties in assigning meaning to their wartime experiences and felt stuck in a negative narrative about the Dutch military mission to former Yugoslavia. As such, they used their trip as a way to break loose from that narrative, and returning to former places of deployment yielded a way to process (traumatic) memories and assign meaning to them. Thus, veteran return trips could be of additional value to existing therapeutic trajectories for the treatment of trauma or moral injury related to military deployment. In the chapter, I showed that the processing of war-related memories had different phases. The first phase focused on introspection. The second phase was characterized by opening up to family, friends, and relatives. Finally, in the third phase, veterans developed a drive to help others. Remarkably, although the veterans' motivations to return stemmed from highly personal concerns, during the return trip they also developed interest in others and educated themselves about the general history of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia and their impact on local communities—something that raised its head again in Chapters 5 and 6.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed the experiences of participants of war-themed summer camps that focused on conserving and maintaining former war sites in Italy, Lithuania, and France. I scrutinized the motivations, experiences, and reflections of the participating volunteers. The desire for affective experiences proved to be a significant motivator for the summer camp volunteers. Saturated by information from books or schools, the volunteers of war-themed summer camps sought to learn about war and conflict in a personal, intimate, and embodied way. Remarkably, where the returning veterans, and to a lesser extent the active military, almost feared emotional encounters with sites of (personal) memory, the volunteers desired such affective encounters on site, and hoped to find meaning in the confrontation with tangible war history. The opportunity to engage in volunteer work helped them to make their presence seem impactful and symbolically 'pay' for their education and experiences. Yet, I concluded that sought impacts and emotions were not always found, which gave rise to tensions and feelings of disappointment. Feelings of guilt about unmet expectations caused volunteers to re-evaluate their motives and look for different ways to make the summer camps meaningful to them. Participants were encouraged to critically reflect on this form of volunteer war tourism in particular, and on societal debates about war and volunteer tourism in general. Such reflections on the nature of war tourism also recurred in Chapter 6 on the Marš Mira, but were much less present in the chapters on the military battlefield tours and the veteran return trips. This suggests that these participants did not strongly identify as war tourists or feel connected to contemporary ideas and narratives on war tourism.

In Chapter 6, the final empirical chapter, I focused on the Marš Mira—the yearly peace march that commemorates the genocide of the Bosnian-Muslim inhabitants of Srebrenica. I scrutinized the ritual dynamics taking place during the march and connected them to the practice of war tourism. This helped me to grasp the touristic features of the march and understand the ritual characteristics of war tourism. I have shown that the desire for embodied and 'authentic' experiences was present among the participating tourists. As was the case with the volunteers, the confrontation with the touristic features of the march caused some of the participants to reflect on their visit and develop personal rituals, through which they tried to deal with the encountered war history. However, the confrontation with the many traces of death and violence along the route also seemed to feed into a politicized and polarized narrative of the Bosnian war, and did not result in critical reflection. Furthermore, I argued that establishing an emotional connection with the commemorated history and related war sites along the route was important for the tourists participating in the Marš Mira. The

role of establishing such an emotional connection was twofold: on the one hand, it functioned as a way to become more involved in the conflict and its victims; on the other hand, emotional involvement also served the larger purpose of memory activism performed through the Marš Mira. In a region where genocide denial flourishes, the participants temporarily occupied the otherwise contested memory sites in the area. They literally took over the sites for the duration of the march, and spread a message of memory activism. In the first instance, the Marš Mira seems to differ clearly from the other cases presented in this dissertation—it is a more direct example of war tourism and memory activism, and provides an unambiguous illustration of the tensions that exist between collective expectations and individual experiences. However, many of the touristic features and tensions present within the peace march can also be discerned in the other cases.

Touching war

In the next section, I present the overarching findings that I identified in this dissertation. First, I consider the motivations and experiences of the visitors. These findings are related to the first subquestion. Second, I delve into processes of meaning making and identification. This corresponds to the second subquestion. Lastly, I elaborate on the diversity of contemporary war touristic practices. This pertains to the third subquestion. Together, these findings help to answer the main question.

Motivations and experiences: encountering an 'authentic' past

The motivation of visitors originates in a predetermined belief that something unique and valuable can be found at former war sites. Former war sites appeal to people because of specific qualities that visitors attribute to those places—qualities that are comprised of the aura of 'authenticity' that is present on site. Because of this, visitors ascribe a certain sense of truthfulness and credibility to a site, which feeds into the idea that something unique and valuable can be found on site. Thus, the aura of 'authenticity' that is experienced on site can be regarded as a construction "between people and things" (Jones, 2010, p. 200)—a construction that nevertheless results in valuable, meaningful, and educative experiences.

The experience of standing in and walking through the place 'where it all happened' while seeing, feeling, hearing, touching, and smelling the surroundings can be powerful and sometimes overwhelming (Iles, 2006, p. 171). Bodily and sensorial experiences of historical places help visitors to imagine past events, identify with their actors, and re-enact their thoughts—it seems much easier to imagine how it must have been to spend day after day in a cold and muddy trench when standing in that trench on a rainy winter's day than when reading about it while sitting in a comfortable chair at home. Here, the countless details and sensations that are present on site enrich one's imagination and contribute to the sense of 'authenticity' present on site. This experience was particularly relevant during the military battlefield tours and the volunteer summer camps, where broadening one's insight into the past was considered important. In the case of the Marš Mira, the experienced 'authenticity' contributed to the validation of historical events—by witnessing 'authentic' traces of the past, the history of the fall of the enclave became more credible. As such, in a context of genocide denial, encountering 'authentic' traces of the past functions as a way to stress the fact that the genocide did take place. Likewise, in the case of the returning veterans, confrontations with 'authentic' places of memory served as a means to validate their personal memories.

Encountering 'authentic' traces of the past also fulfilled another role: bodily and sensorial experiences of personal places of memory helped to recall forgotten memories (Marschall, 2015b). For instance, veterans who returned to places of their deployment used these visits to fill in the gaps in their memories. In some cases, the return trip even supported them in working through painful or traumatic memories. As such, the veterans' trips to personal places of memory alluded to the idea that these places embody a certain truthfulness about their past—the tangible traces of the past told stories that seemed hard to contradict, and in that sense assisted them in recomposing a credible story about their deployment in former Yugoslavia. Here, it is important to underline that returning to sites of personal memory enabled the establishment of new memories rather than the retrieval of old ones (Marschall, 2015b, p. 40). As I concluded in Chapter 5, undertaking a return trip mainly functioned as a means to create new memories and stories. Therefore, experienced discrepancies between individual memories and 'authentic' memory sites might result in disappointment or insecurity.

Although the aura of 'authenticity' formed a significant feature of visits to former war sites, it is also highly ambivalent. For visitors, the aura of 'authenticity' present on site constituted an important part of their motivation and on-site experience. Meanwhile, this aura of 'authenticity' is co-constructed, sometimes even artificial, and never gives access to the past 'as it was.' This is

not problematic in itself, but it can be debated if visitors do indeed recognize this constructed or artificial character of the aura of 'authenticity.' As we have seen, visitors tend to place a lot of value on the 'historical reality' that is embodied by former war sites. This might cause some of them to refrain from taking up a critical perspective on the sites as co-constructed and curated places. Sometimes, a book might capture a more layered image of the past than a physical site. But the 'reality effect' experienced by some of the visitors is hard to refute. Undeniably, the persuasiveness of 'authentic' traces of the past is sometimes subjected to abuse for propagandistic purposes, and "geography can be used as a political tool" (Muzaini & Yeoh, 2005, p. 357). As such, appeals to a certain 'authenticity' should always be approached with care. At the same time, as this study demonstrates, visitors' experiences are highly diverse and it is important not to deprive visitors of their agency to comprehend the political function that some war heritage fulfills.

Now, I would like to elaborate on one specific aspect of the 'authentic' encounter with the past that was present in all researched cases. Education is often mentioned as one of the main motives to undertake war or heritage tourism (Biran et al., 2011; Isaac & Çakmak, 2016; Light, 2017, p. 285; Winter, 2011). For all investigated groups of visitors, a part of their experience consisted of learning about war history. And indeed, in some cases, education was the main motive to undertake a visit, such as with the officers and cadets. At other times education appeared to be a side effect of the visit, like with the returning veterans. The educational value of visiting a former war site, again, resided in the idea that something extra could be found on site, something that seemed difficult to find elsewhere or read about in books. Yet, it is important to mention that although this 'something extra' was related to the sense of 'authenticity' present on site, it was not completely dependent on it. Rather, in many cases the educational value had to do with the fact that by visiting historical places, visitors were encouraged to learn about the past on different levels: cognitively, bodily, and affectively. As mentioned before, on site, the past seemed easier to imagine, and because of that, easier to believe and easier to understand. Sometimes, visiting a former war site helped visitors to obtain a more layered and complex image of the past, because of the presence of information that is not or cannot be captured in history books, or due to the experience of standing on historical grounds. For some of the military visitors, for example, it was only on site that they understood the difficulties an army commander would have faced when deciding on the next military move, and they became aware of the many factors that instigated such a decision. Because of this, they obtained a more in-depth understanding of the reasoning behind a tactical decision.

Evidently, the educational experience of visitors is influenced by the characteristics of a site and the background of the visitors. Also, the meaning attached to on-site learning experiences is colored by the expectations of the visitors (e.g., Poria, Butler & Airey, 2004, p. 26). For instance, in the chapter on the volunteers, it was apparent that rather indistinct historical sites that did not contain a lot of contextual information only appealed to the volunteers with a clear interest in history or prior knowledge about the historical events that occurred there. For those volunteers that did not have this interest or knowledge, more was needed to make the site attractive to them. These volunteers seemed more impressed by the sites that contained clear and recognizable (textual or material) references to the past. I identified a similar difference between the veterans and the military personnel with or without much historical knowledge.

However, if we define the educational value of a visit in terms of broadening one's insight into the complex and multifaceted past, my research suggests that the educational value of a visit should sometimes be questioned. The case study on the military officers and cadets indicated that for some of them, the visits did not do much more than confirm their existing knowledge, and in that sense did not expand their historical knowledge. Also, in the experience of the cadets, their battlefield tours did not stimulate them to acknowledge the existence of multiple perspectives on an event. Similarly, participating in the Marš Mira is not likely to result in a growing awareness of different perspectives. Although the march assisted in increasing knowledge of the Bosnian-Muslim victims of the war, and as such referred to the Bosnian-Muslim narrative of victimhood, the politicization of the march hampered the representation of the past as complex and contradictory. It has been argued that the immediacy of experiencing historical sites, and the consequent emotional and moral responses of visitors, prevents visitors from taking a reflective and detached stance from the presented histories (De Bruijn, 2014, p. 205). To a certain extent, this also applies to the researched cases. However, this does not mean that people do not learn anything at all by visiting historical war sites. Rather, as this study demonstrates, on-site 'learning' is pertinent to self-reflection, personal development, and personal moral and emotional engagement with specific war histories. As such, while war tourism sometimes results in confirmation of personal convictions and stereotypes, at other times it provides room for discussions and confrontations with others. Here, the specific design of a site, differences between iconic *lieux de mémoire* and rather indistinct landscapes, the presence of other tourists, and the timing of a visit (close to a memorial date or not) all seem to play a role in the way in which personal convictions are confirmed or challenged.

Meaning making by means of witnessing and identification

Throughout this dissertation, I argued that when people visit a former war site, they do more than just gaze at material traces or objects (Iles, 2006, p. 163). In many cases, visits to former war sites are undertaken in the expectation of a meaningful experience. And even though visitors sometimes had to adjust their expectations in order to make the visit meaningful to them, they described their visit as significant. This particularly holds up for the returning veterans, for whom, of course, assigning meaning to their wartime memories was the main motive to travel to Bosnia.

An important part of the meaning that visitors ascribe to their visit is related to the specific role they take up on site. In Chapter 3, the chapter on the military battlefield tours, I used Collingwood's theory on historical re-enactment to comprehend the activities of the military visitors. As discussed, Collingwood regards material remnants of the past as means that help someone to imagine the past and apply the method of the re-enactment of past thought. The role of the visitor, then, would be to inquire the course of a past event by means of question and answer. Yet, as argued in the chapter, in this approach, the emotions of the inquirer are ignored (Grever, 2012). The empirical results of this case-study on the military battlefield tours demonstrate that the participant's emotions and attempts to identify with past actors did influence their perspective on past events. Therefore, the role of the visitors should be understood as more than an attempt to—rationally—develop insight in the past, and must include their emotional and affective response to the visit. As such, this study confirms that historical re-enactments should not be conceptualized as a pre-dominantly cognitive practices, but as embodied, multi-sensory practices, combining emotions, impressions and thoughts.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I discussed the concept of secondary witnessing in order to nuance our understanding of the role and experience of the war tourist. I referred to the work of Paul Ricoeur in order to get a deeper understanding of the secondary witness in relation to war tourism. For Ricoeur, the act of witnessing makes up an important phase in the production of historical knowledge. He argues that a testimony "constitutes the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 21). Contrary to Collingwood's approach to historical re-enactment, Ricoeur's approach to witnessing seems less burdened by a focus on a rational questioning of past events, and leaves more room for the witness' subjectivity, affect, and emotions. Meanwhile, Ricoeur ascribes a sense of responsibility to the witness, which encourages him or her to come up with a trustworthy account of the

witnessed events. This responsibility adds substance to the role of the witness: the witness becomes the mediator between the historical events and anyone who wants to learn about that history without having been present on site. Still, in Ricoeur's take on the act of witnessing, the tensions between a personal and affective understanding of the witnessed events, and the responsibility for composing a 'trustworthy' account of those events remain present. We can discern a related tension between affect and trustworthiness in the experience of many war tourists.

As mentioned before, material traces of war are often regarded as providing proof of the occurrence of specific events. These traces are the testimonials of the events that occurred on site—the mediators between the past and the present. As such, visitors that encounter these traces become involved in the stories told by them—and can become secondary witnesses (Violi, 2014, p. 60). Indeed, as Violi notes, adopting the role of a secondary witness brings about a sense of responsibility (2014, p. 61). This responsibility can, for example, be recognized in visitors' urge to educate themselves about the events that took place or in their aspiration to transfer the obtained knowledge to others. For war tourists, adopting the role of a secondary witness requires a certain engagement with the history of a site and the victims. This engagement is built in different ways. In the chapter on the war-themed summer camps, I showed how the volunteers developed such an engagement—after spending multiple days at a memory site, they demonstrated a sense of care for the place and its history. A similar process took place with the veterans who initiated volunteer work in Bosnia or who felt inclined to support other veterans on their return—by being present in the area for a longer period, they began to care for the country and its history.

Assigning visitors the role of secondary witnesses can be seen as a more democratic take on the concept of witnessing (Hogervorst, 2020, p. 12). Such a democratization allows visitors to take up a (more) important role in recounting and reproducing the history of a site as a witness. The need to take up such an important and responsible role seems most urgent in the case of a highly polarized or politicized memory culture. Participants of the Marš Mira, for example, embraced the role of secondary witnesses to the war crimes that are subject to ethno-nationalist memory politics and genocide denial. In a similar vein, working on a small, remote, and often vandalized Jewish cemetery in Lithuania encouraged volunteers to become secondary witnesses to a history that many local citizens did not seem to care for. These examples illustrate how adopting a position of secondary witness to site-specific histories also fulfilled a role of asking for attention for deviant, forgotten, or smaller and personal histories. However, as Hughes (2008, p. 326) concludes, it is important to realize that taking up

the role of a secondary witness can also be the result of the absence of other experiences: by testifying that one has at least 'been there,' visits that lack an educational or emotional appeal gain significance.

As I hope to have shown in this dissertation, adopting the role of a secondary witness makes visits to former war sites meaningful. Feelings of responsibility and care for preserving and recounting the memories encapsulated by specific war sites help visitors to feel engaged with the site and, because of that, allow them to regard their visit as significant. the concept of secondary witnessing acknowledges that these feelings of responsibility, care, and engagement are central themes in the way visitors experience of former war sites.

Affective experiences actively contribute to making visits to war sites meaningful. Throughout this study, I have often mentioned the affective encounters that occurred on site, particularly in the chapter on the volunteers. I adopted Sara Ahmed's call for asking "what emotions do, instead of what they are" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 4). Indeed, in all cases, affective encounters with the past were significant for the visitors. For instance, one of the reasons the volunteers joined war-themed summer camps was the fact that these summer camps provided them with a different perspective on war history: a perspective that was not general or abstract, but personal, intimate, and affective. Remarkably, some of the volunteers mentioned that they specifically desired such personal, intimate, and affective encounters with war history, because they had difficulty in engaging with the more general war histories. Spending time at a former war site and focusing on a particular episode in the history of war therefore helped them to re-engage with war history. In general, the possibility of establishing an affective connection with the past was rooted in earlier mentioned features of the sites: the aura of 'authenticity,' learning opportunities, and bearing witness to tragic historical events. "Encounters with auras of authentic moments, objects, and landscapes can affect those in their presence," states Carter (2019, p. 212). Nevertheless, the question is whether such affective experiences can be ascribed to sites themselves, as some authors imply (Buda et al., 2014). Studies like these seem to suggest that the auratic qualities of former war sites 'impress' something on their visitors, both physically and emotionally (pp. 109–110, p. 112). Yet, as this dissertation shows, even though some individuals were strongly affected by their visits, the capacity to be affected rather seems to be embedded in the visitors' personal background and history. Physical sites, in that sense, serve as conductors that encourage an affective response, but should not, in my opinion, be regarded as vessels for affective experiences.

Now, moving away from this discussion on the driving forces of affective experiences, what were the consequences of affective encounters with the

past? One consequence that I discerned was that affective experiences instigated visitors to identify with past situations and past actors. Such identification was possible because the stories told on site were specific and comprehensible: reading a name on a tombstone is often more emotional than reading a general report on a battle might be. As Violi (2014, p. 65) states, it is important to acknowledge that the term 'identification' does not imply a complete fusion of visitor and historical actor. Rather, through identification, visitors became aware of the connections and similarities between past actors and themselves, without losing the realization that the past is different from the present. Identification, for example, occurred when a twenty-five-year-old volunteer learned about the life and death of a twenty-five-year-old Italian partisan fighter and realized that their life wouldn't have been very different had they been born in rural Italy a century ago. However, although identification sometimes allowed for a better understanding of a part situation, it was not desired in all cases. For military participants, who might still be confronted with real war in the future, identification with past military caused tensions, specifically when the actions of this past military pertained to controversial or highly emotional actions. With the veterans, identification played less of a role. Whereas returning helped them to empathize with locals and their endurances during the war, their clear role in the conflict seemed to have hampered the need for identification. From this, I conclude that identification with past actors on site is mainly important for those who feel that (the history of) war is at a distance and wish to be affected by it. As such, identification is particularly relevant when the lives and deeds of past actors do not have a clear relation with the visitors' personal or professional involvement in a past war, or do not concern controversial ideas or actions.

Thus, identification with past actors and events resulted in the development of an emotional or affective relation with the former war sites and the stories they represent. Importantly, identification also assisted in assigning meaning to the experience of visiting a former war site: by empathizing with the bleak and sad histories of the site and imagining the emotions and feelings associated with those histories, visitors went through something themselves. They felt through and with them. Because of this, they considered the visit meaningful. Remarkably, the desire for affective experiences sometimes resulted in feelings of guilt and disappointment when those experiences were not found. What followed was self-reflection, a re-evaluation of intentions, and attempts to find meaning in a different way, for example by shifting the focus to personal growth and development. Here, we see how affective encounters are embedded in broader processes of identity building and meaning making.

Reconsidering contemporary war tourism

What do these findings tell us about war tourism and the phenomenon of visiting former war sites and the role of war tourism in contemporary Europe? My research shows that contemporary war tourism is a diverse form of tourism that is undertaken for very different reasons. These reasons range from highly personal to more professional: from processing personal memories or emotions to educational battlefield tours. However, people are drawn towards former war sites in the expectation of powerful experiences: experiences that are meaningful and affective. The appeal of visiting war sites, in that sense, lies with the specific qualities that visitors ascribe to the sites: they embody an aura of 'authenticity' and appear to provide insight into histories of war and suffering. Adopting a role as a secondary witness engages visitors with the past and provides them with a sense of responsibility and care for the past. Developing engagement with war sites alludes to the expression of, and reflection on, personal and collective identities. A recurring tension in the act of visiting former war sites can be discerned between the desire to be involved with the past and the knowledge that such involvement or proximity is never entirely achievable: a visit to a former war site confirms the fact that the past lies at an unbridgeable distance from the present. However, I would like to argue that such a distance is very much needed in order to encounter the past at its fullest—only then does it seem safe to completely engage with it.

This study suggests that contemporary war tourism revolves around the significance that visitors hope to find in their visits to former war sites. This seems to reverberate in the narratives of mourning and commemoration that are used to explain early twentieth-century war tourism (Lloyd, 1998; Winter, 1995). Yet, whereas the narratives of mourning and commemoration emphasize the place of war history within specific national identities, such emphasis seems to be less explicitly present in contemporary narratives and ideas on war tourism. Instead, individual experiences have become more important. This does not imply that national identity has disappeared from contemporary war tourism—the study on the Marš Mira illustrates that war tourism still fulfills the role of performing (an alliance to) a national or ethnic identity. Rather, what we see is that the late twentieth-century approach to tourism as characterized by mass entertainment, fun, and superficiality is not applicable when trying to understand current forms of war tourism (Light, 2017).

Contemporary cultural narratives on war tourism in Europe pertain to the significance that can be found in war touristic experiences. Yet, as demonstrated in the different case studies, this search for significance is sometimes at odds with

visitors' experiences. Sometimes, visitors struggled with their 'touristic' presence at a former war site. This caused them to re-evaluate their motivation to visit or their on-site behavior, and occasionally even resulted in the development of a critical perspective on the practice of visiting former war sites in general. At other times, it seemed that the cultural narratives (and accompanying societal expectations) on the significance of a visit to a former war site had a strong impact on the visitors and limited them in expressing their own (deviant) impressions and experiences.

Consequently, the presence of these cultural narratives on meaningful war tourism gives rise to processes of inclusion and exclusion. Visitors, consciously or unconsciously, may feel forced to report having had a certain experience, while the reality might have been different to them. To a certain extent, the in-depth interviews and observations have allowed me to look for such deviant experiences. For example, the tensions that are instigated by the cultural narrative on meaningful war tourism were explicitly present in the study on the summer camp volunteers, who clearly struggled when their expectations did not meet the reality. A similar process seems to have happened with participants of the Marš Mira, including myself. Likewise, tensions between cultural and societal expectations and individual experiences were visible. Cadets, for example, commented on what was expected from them by their teachers, and explained that this differed from their own experiences. Yet, in the case of the veterans, deviant experiences were less easy to discern—in fact, the veterans seemed to have created their own narrative of the 'returning veteran,' which can be seen as being part of contemporary cultural narratives on meaningful war tourism. This absence of deviant voices may be due to the seriousness of the topic (the Dutch liability for the fall of the Srebrenica enclave), the focus on processing memories and therapeutic healing, or a military culture in which deviance is not appreciated, but more research needs to be done on the phenomenon of veteran return trips to confirm such hypotheses. Nonetheless, the dynamics between such narratives and individual experiences make up an important part of the visitors' experience and are part of the appeal of visiting former war sites. This study indicates that visits to former war sites function as means to relate oneself to dominant narratives on war tourism, and reflect on it whenever appropriate and feasible within the limits of the discourse.

These conclusions need to be seen in light of the following limitations. First, due to the method of data collection used in this dissertation, too much emphasis might have been put on the significance of the visit. As interviewing is aimed towards reflection, and questions about the significance of the visits were asked to the interviewees, visitors might have felt inclined to talk more

about their reflections and assigned meaning than they would have done in a different setting. Second, because of the focus on researching the diversity of the phenomenon of war tourism by studying quite particular groups of visitors, there is a risk of having overemphasized the weight of the significance tourists in general ascribe to their visits. That said, the focus on the meaning and significance in experiences of war tourism also returns in many other studies (e.g., Cohen, 2011; Dunkley et al., 2011; Koleth, 2014), and is as such in line with the research conducted for this dissertation. Lastly, contemporary ideas and narratives on war tourism that emphasize the significance of a visit are related to the moral policing that war tourism is often subject to. Think, for example, about the public outrage directed towards the teenager who took the infamous 'Auschwitz selfie.' To avoid such moral policing, visitors might have felt the pressure to underline the significance of their experience instead of, for example, mentioning entertainment or sensation as their main motive to engage in war tourism. Therefore, the meaning of their visit could have been overemphasized.

In sum, in this dissertation, I have proposed to include the concept of secondary witnessing into the research field of war tourism. Working with secondary witnessing helps us to expose some important characteristics of war tourism: the development of feelings of engagement, responsibility, reflection, and care for the visited places and histories among the war tourists, and the tensions that relate to this development. At the end of Chapter 1, I described why such an approach might be valuable. In retrospect, of these reasons, the ambiguity present in both secondary witnessing and war tourism—an ambiguity characterized by the fact that witnesses and tourists are always both insiders and outsiders to the encountered histories—returned most often in the empirical research. This ambiguity, as embodied by the witnessing war tourist, seems pertinent to the phenomenon of war tourism, even though this ambiguity can take up a different form among different groups and types of war tourists. Due to the ethnographic character of this research and the limited amount of case studies conducted, I was not able to theoretically explore this ambiguity in further detail. Still, throughout this dissertation, I hope to have presented arguments for the necessity of further theorizing of this topic in future research.

New directions for research

This dissertation focused on visits to physical places associated with past wars and conflicts: sites where armies or citizens have been located during the war, where wartime events happened, or are commemorated. In the twenty-first

century, wars are fought in new ways. The image of soldiers navigating military drones from a location far away from the war has become a striking example of these changing ways of conducting war. On the ground, fast military maneuvers, where small army units move in and out of conflict areas, are becoming much more common than the well-known long-term and large-scale military presence in an area. Developments like these will have an impact on the war sites of the future. What will such sites look like? Will they still be related to tangible sites of conflict? And what are the consequences of these developments for war tourism?

This dissertation might provide some clues to answer questions like these. Throughout this project, I have emphasized the significance that physical places of war have for visitors, and I do not expect that this significance is going to wear off soon. On the contrary, it has been argued that in an era of digitization, visiting physical places has become more and more important (Couldry, 2000; Jansson, 2002; Reijnders, 2011). We also see this development in practice: the Dutch air and marine forces, for example, military specializations that are not used to working on land, have started to organize military battlefield tours for their units as well. Moreover, places that are indirectly connected to warfare, such as the building in which a drone pilot worked, are added to the array of 'sites associated with war and conflict'. Furthermore, the aforementioned points consider the military presence at specific sites. Although the military involvement with sites of war and conflict is becoming more short-term and is more often exercised from a distance, this is not the case for the citizens that are impacted by war and conflict. For them, tangible places associated with war and conflict will keep their relevance for personal commemorative purposes, and these places will as such also be susceptible to war tourism. Therefore, the need to conserve physical places of war will not cease to exist soon. Currently, we also see that for those major crises that are associated with less palpable places like the sea, tangible commemorative places are initiated, such as the *Drowned Migrant Cemetery* on the coast of Tunisia.[2] Likewise, material losses caused by climate change, like the first disappearance of an Icelandic glacier, are mourned through the establishment of a physical memorial.[3] Examples like these illustrate that sites that refer to (former) war, conflict, and crisis are not likely to lose their significance, especially if we start focusing more on the humanitarian and even natural consequences of conflicts and crises.

2 This project was initiated by anthropologist Amade M'Charek (University of Amsterdam). See: https://www.stichting-dmc.nl/en/

3 See: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jul/22/memorial-to-mark-icelandic-glacier-lost-to-climate-crisis

Developments like these point to interesting and new directions for research on war tourism. In this dissertation, I have aimed to explore the diversity of war tourism by focusing on particular groups of visitors. Yet, these groups of people were still visiting sites that were very much related to military conflicts and their direct consequences. In order to truly capture the diversity of war tourism, it is pertinent to look for more diversity in the sites that are visited. By taking into account those sites that are, for instance, associated with the refugee crisis or climate change, an even more diverse perspective on the act of visiting sites of (former) war and conflict might be obtained, and might result in new theories about 'war tourism,' as well as definitions of it. Indeed, a move away from heritage and memory sites could result in a better understanding of how and why people are drawn to places associated with all kinds of conflicts.

Furthermore, more diversity could be achieved by repeating this research in a global context. This dissertation is limited by its focus on European sites and visitors. This goes for a large number of studies on war tourism. In order to understand more about the way in which visitors of different backgrounds experience their visitors, it is necessary to broaden the scope to different forms of war tourism all over the world, in particular to those regions that are less researched, such as Central, East, and South East Asia; Latin America; and Africa. As the way in which death, personal memory, and commemoration are dealt with varies strongly among different cultures, the findings of such research might help us to better grasp the significance of war tourism for a more diverse range of people. Also, research in which the different stages of a visit (anticipation, on-site experience, reflection) are explicitly taken up could contribute to the understanding of war tourists' experience all over the world.

Further research might benefit from a gender-oriented approach to researching war tourism. As gender was not the main topic of this dissertation, I could not explore this issue in depth. My case studies suggest that specific activities related to war tourism attract visitors with a specific gender identity. The participants of the military battlefield tours and the veteran return trips almost all identified as male; and the same goes for the participants of the Marš Mira. Meanwhile, the summer camp volunteers predominantly identified as female. Although these numbers confirm the general composition of these groups, they are still remarkable, and deserve more academic attention. I deem such attention for gender identity a relevant topic for further research, as a focus on 'gendered' experiences of war tourism might reveal deviant experiences and counternarratives—experiences that are also important in comprehending the diversity of war touristic experiences.

A more specific topic for future research is the effect that visiting former

war sites could have on the mental health of those that are directly associated with these sites. The chapter on the veterans has shown that revisiting personal places of the past can be beneficial to processing memories. Yet, this study was conducted after the veterans had undertaken their trips, and as such might be subject to a certain confirmation bias. In order to truly understand the effects of a return trip, it is necessary to conduct longitudinal research on return trips, in which preparation, experience, and evaluation are taken into account, preferably in different international contexts. A question that in my opinion is highly relevant that emerges from this study is the issue of how to accommodate a need for processing memories relating to wars and conflicts when the sites associated with those wars and conflicts are not accessible anymore, or never will be. This pertains, for example, to military persons that cannot access the area of their former deployment for safety reasons, but all the more to refugees who fled their homes and are not likely to be able to ever return. Obviously, memorials or monuments can be of value to them, but they lack the aura of 'authenticity' of the tangible places 'where it all happened.' As such, the question remains as to the ways in which (virtual or physical substitutes of) tangible places could help these people to process memories. A hopeful conclusion that I drew in the chapter on return trips is that visiting places that do not exactly match a personal memory site, but still refer to a conflict, can sometimes also result in revelatory experiences. This provides an interesting starting point for further research about the phenomenon of the return trip.

Throughout this study, I have navigated through the peripheries of war tourism in order to emphasize the diversity of its experiences. In doing so, I have tried to expose the different layers, dynamics, and tensions present in those experiences of war tourism. I hope to have shown why so many people of different backgrounds keep engaging in war tourism nowadays, and in what ways visits to former war sites could result in powerful and significant encounters with the past. For many people, tangible traces of the past allow for a touch of war.

On one of my trips to Bosnia, I met dr. Branka Antić Štauber, a Bosnian woman who has committed herself to improving the lives of, among others, female refugees from Srebrenica. She does this through her foundation Snaga žene—the strength of women. These women have lost everything. Their husbands, sons, fathers, their family. They have endured sexual violence, poverty, and discrimination. Still, years after the genocide, they have started to return to their family homes in Srebrenica. Snaga žene helps them to build on their lives and reconcile with the past, by living and working on their family lands, and by growing and selling flowers, tea, and herbs. In this way, they add a new layer of meaning to the places that have seen so much death and

suffering. I want to conclude this dissertation with something Branka said on a sunny day at her office in Tuzla, and that has stuck with me since: "Don't underestimate the value of the ground."

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APPENDIX A
OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWEES

NAME	AGE	PROFESSION	GENDER
Albert	35	officer	m
Daan	23	officer	m
Erwin	n/a	non-commissioned officer	m
Frank	44	non-commissioned officer	m
Karel	54	officer	m
Klaas	21	cadet	m
Mayke	32	non-commissioned officer	f
Mike	21	cadet	m
Richard	43	officer	m
Robert	46	non-commissioned officer	m
Sven	24	cadet	m

NAME	AGE	MISSION IN BOSNIA	FIRST RETURN	GENDER
Bart	61	2002–2003	n/a	m
Bram	70	1997	2000	m
Daniel	45	1995	2013	m
David	45	1994	2005	m
Dennis	46	1995, 1996–1997, 1998	2011	m
Eddie	62	1994–1995	2013	m
Erik	43	1995	2017	m
Frank	42	1995	2008	m
Jaap	70	1993–1994	2017	m
Kasper	45	1992–1993	2011	m
Maarten	42	1994	1996	m
Marcel	46	1994–1995, 2000	2000	m
Paul	46	1993	1999	m
Peter	68	1992–1993, 1996–1997, 1998	2006	m
Roy	43	1993	2015	m
Tom	42	1994–1995	2016	m
Willem	65	1994, 1997, 2002	1998	m

Švenčionys, Lithuania, 2016.

NAME	AGE	NATIONALITY	GENDER
Andrea	27	German	f
Franziska	29	German	f
Hanna	24	Belorussian	f
Jacob	22	German	m
Jan	26	German	m
Julian	20	German	m
Maike	25	German	f
Miriam	26	German	f
Nele	19	German	f
Sammy	24	German	f

Marcevol, France, 2017.

NAME	AGE	NATIONALITY	GENDER
Chrisoula	49	Greek	f
Lisa	20	German	f
Manon	23	French	f
Mina	24	German	f
Seyit	24	Turkish	m
Smaragda	20	Greek	f

NAME	AGE	NATIONALITY	GENDER
Alicja	63	Polish	f
Daniele	29	Italian	m
Desislava	22	Bulgarian	f
Jana	22	German	f
Justine	24	German	f
Laura	23	German	f
Lisa	27	German	f
Mevisa	26	Albanian	f
Miri	22	German	f
Nele	21	German	f

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDES

Origins

- Motivation to work in with the army
- At which moment in your life did the idea to join the army occur?
- Has the motivation changed over time? If so, how?
- How did you experience your military training time?
- How do you experience being part of the army?

War history and education

- Can you describe your interest in war?
- Do you spend time outside working hours on (the history of) war?
- Do you consider it important be educated in war history?
- Do you have an idea where your interest in war history originates in? If there is no specific interest in war history: why do you think war history is not interesting to you?
- Do you consider war historical education important for other members of the military?
- If so, for which members?

Military exercises

- How often do you participate in military exercises in the field?
- How did you experience them?
- Which ones do you value the most, and why?
- What comprises, according to you, the value of military exercises (if at all)?

Tactical exercises on historical locations

- How often have you participated in these kinds of exercises?
- What is your general impression of them?
- Can you describe what you learn during such an exercise (if anything)?
- What do visits to former war sites mean to you?
- Does it matter which perspectives are being discussed on site?
- Are there war sites that are of specific interest to you?
- Is it possible to make any comparison between military exercises and being deployed?

Visiting war cemeteries

- How do you experience visits to war cemeteries?
- What does a visit to a war cemetery mean to you?
- When visiting a cemetery, you inevitably come into contact with other (non-military) visitors. How do you feel about the presence of these people on site?

Information related to career in the army

- Educational background
- Function in the army
- Duration of time working in the army
- Experience with missions abroad
- Career after the mission

Origins

- Motivation to work in the army
- Has the motivation changed over time? If so, how?
- How did you experience your military training time?
- How do you/did you experience being part of the army?

Deployment

- When did you go on a mission, and what functions did you perform?
- How did you prepare for the mission?
- What are the things that you remember most of your mission? Could you talk a bit about your experiences?
- Can you describe your life on the compound? What were your daily tasks?
- Did you go on leave during the deployment? Can you describe your experiences?
- How did you come back?
- How did you continue your life after the deployment?

Return trip

- When did you go on a return trip?
- What motivated you to undertake a return trip?
- What did you do during your return trip?
- Can you talk a bit about your experiences? What impressed you the most? Are there things that under-impressed you?
- Did you visit any memorials, cemeteries or war museums? If so, how did you experience them?
- How do you look back at your return trip today?

Veteran life

- How do you experience your life as a veteran?
- How do you consider your societal position as a veteran?
- What do you notice when you tell people you went to Bosnia?
- What do others (family, friends) think about your return trip?

Motivation to join the camp

- How did you find out about this camp?
- What awakened your interest for this summer camp?
- Did you participate in any other similar projects before? When/where?
- What convinced you to get involved?
- Why did you choose to volunteer in this particular place?
- Do you have any personal connection to the site?

Expectations and personal goals

- What are your expectations regarding this project?
- What are you hoping to achieve through your stay here on a personal level?
- How do you think this experience will affect you?
- What do you want to be learning here during your stay?
- What personal qualities do you think are important for a volunteer in such an environment?

Historical awareness

- Did you study or read about the history of this place before you came here?
- Can you describe your interest in war?
- What do you find interesting about the history of this place?
- Do you think it is important to have background knowledge about such sites before becoming involved as a volunteer? Why?
- How do you relate to the historical events that took place here? What meaning do they have for you? How do you feel about what happened here?

Tangible past

- Can you describe what the tangible presence of history means to you?
- How do you feel about being on this former war site in person? What does it make you think about?
- How do you feel about the actual site? What impressed you most on site? What don't you like? What does this building/layout/environment make you think of?
- How do you think a volunteer should behave on this location? What behavior should be encouraged or discouraged?
- What are, according to you, the differences between a touristic experience of a war site and volunteering at a war site?

Experience and evaluation

- How are you feeling about this project?

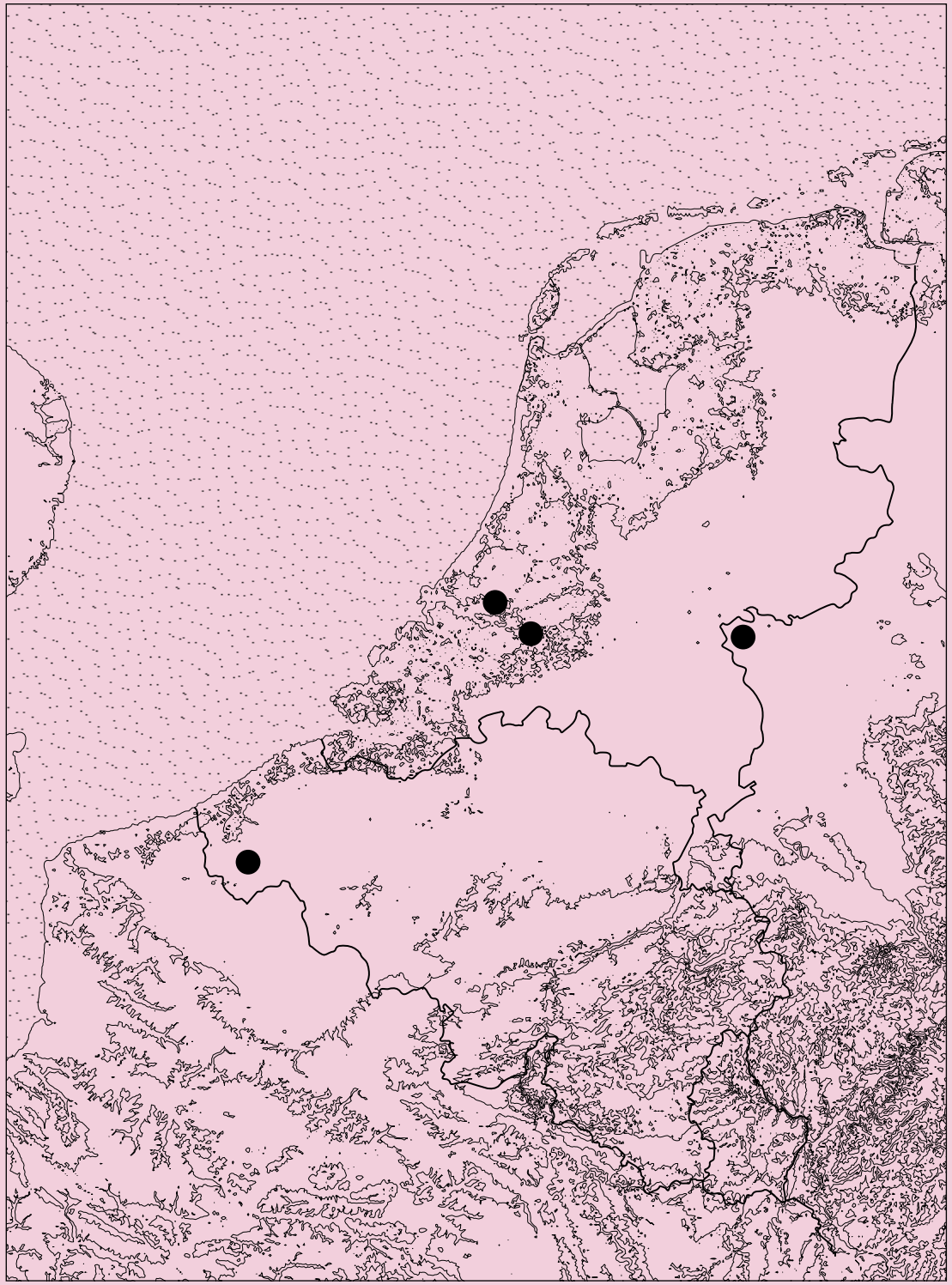
- How do you feel about the group you work together with? Did you make friends over here? How did you feel being part of this group?

What activities did you do together? Do you think you will stay in contact?

- In your work, did you interact with people from the local community? What are your impressions?
- What do you like about being here? What do you think could be done better?
- How do you appreciate your experience here? What impressions did it leave you?
- What did you learn (about history of the site, about the past events, war) during your stay?
- What have been the strong points of this program? And what do you think can be improved?
- Did your initial expectations change during the project? In what way?
- Do you think you will repeat this experience of volunteering on former war sites in the future?
- Do you intend to share this experience with your friends and family? How do you think you can do this?
- Would you recommend this kind of volunteer work to others? What impact do you think it has on people?
- What are your wishes for the future regarding this place?

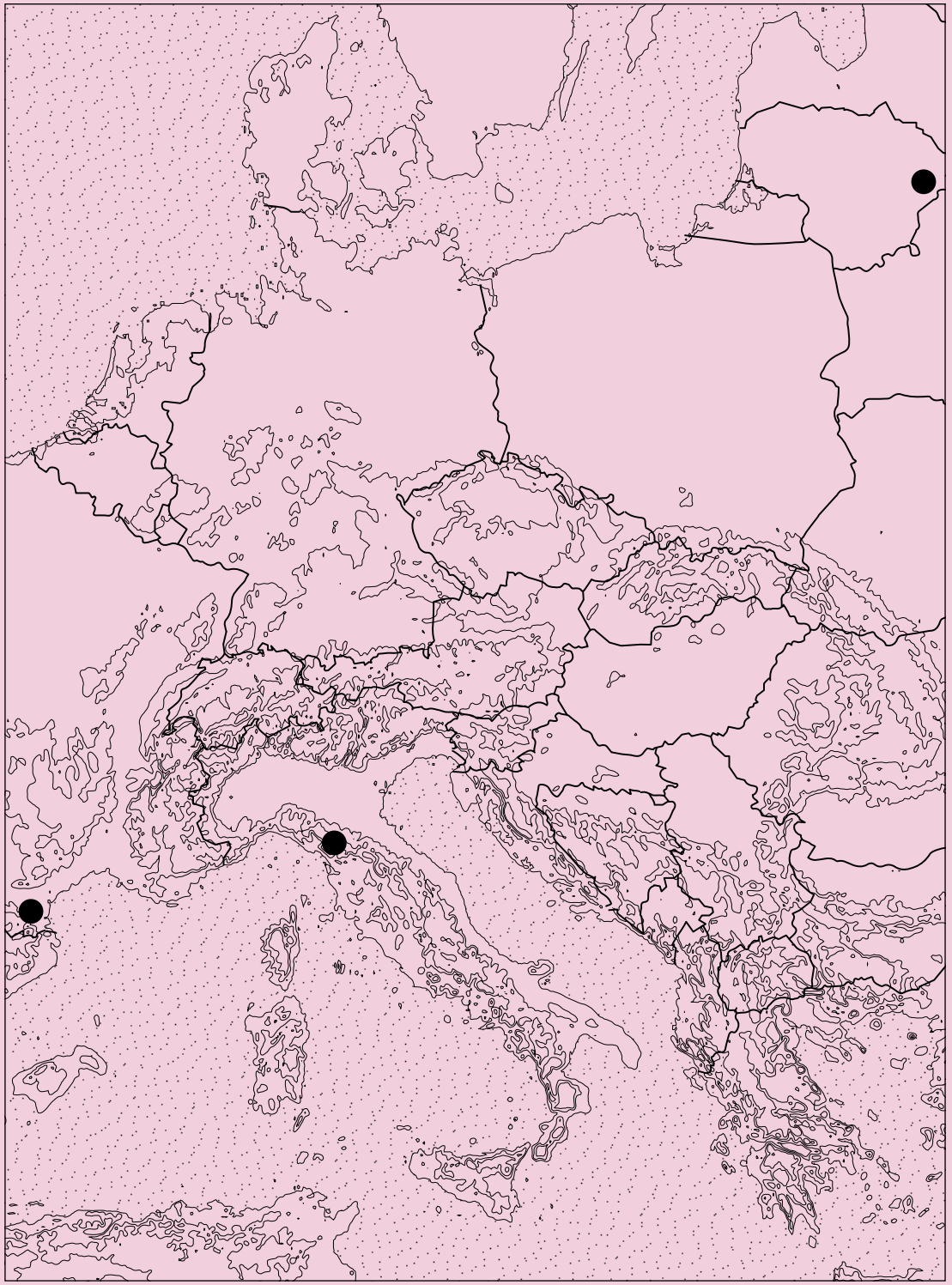
APPENDIX C
MAPS

1. Locations military battlefield tours.



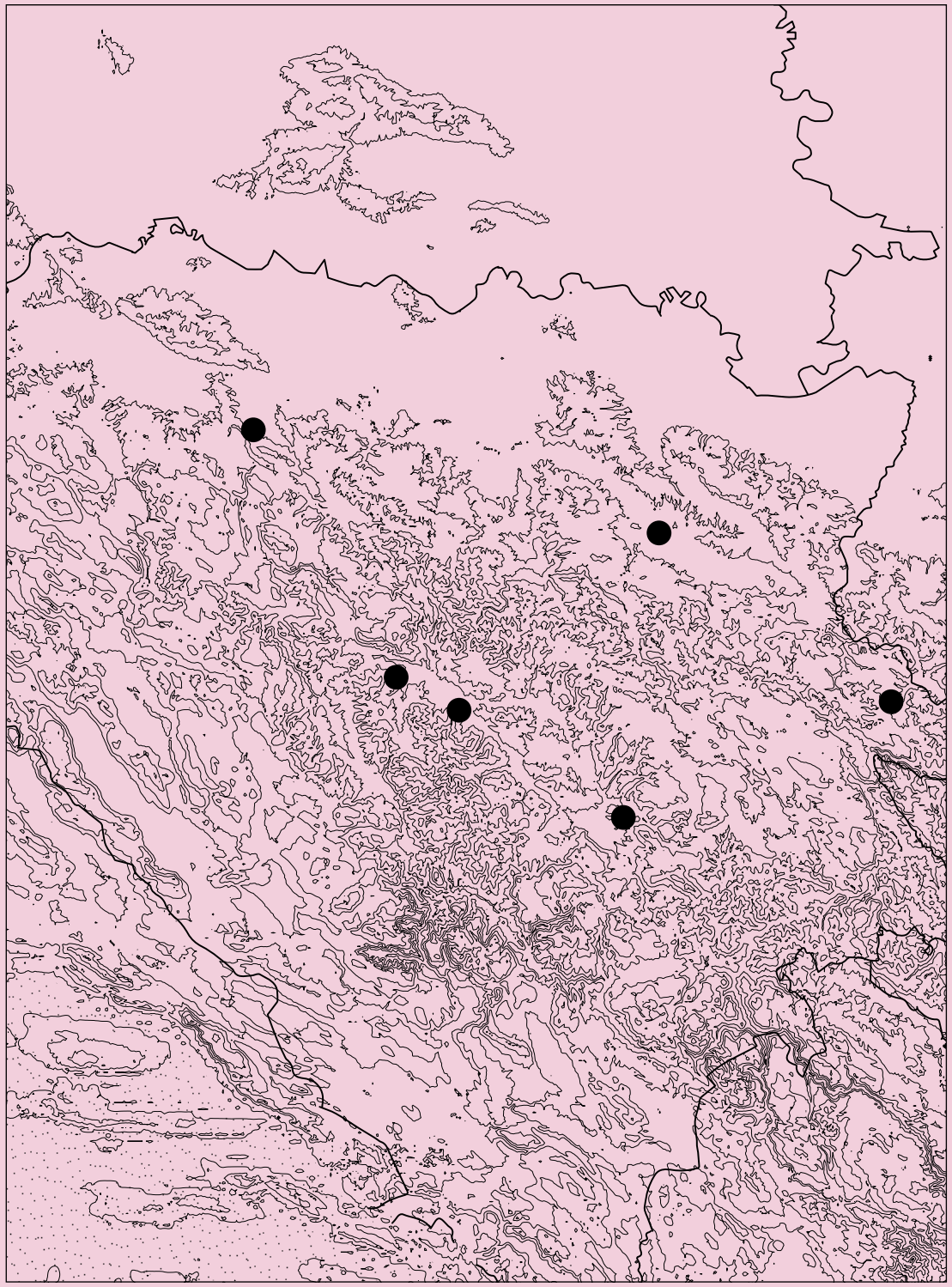
From left to right: Ypres (Belgium), Rotterdam, Dordrecht (The Netherlands), Reichswald (Germany).

2. Locations summer camps.



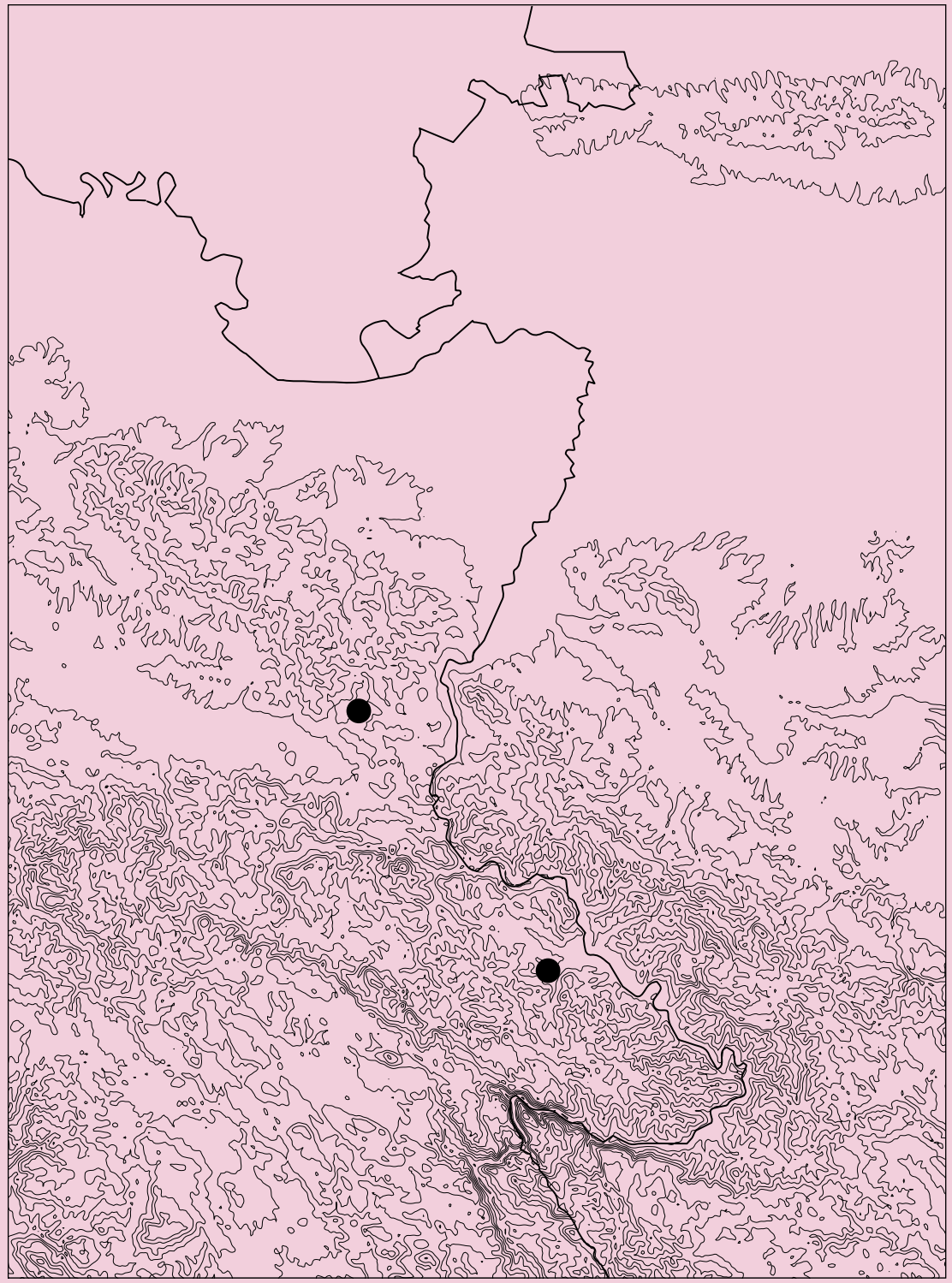
From left to right: Marcevol (France), Montemaggio/Sant'anna di Stazzema (Italy), Švenčionys (Lithuania).

3. Locations of the deployment of the interviewed veterans.



From left to right: Banja Luka, Novi Travnik, Busovaca, Sarajevo, Lukavac, Srebrenica/Potočari. (Bosnia)

4. Route of the Marš Mira.



From left to right: Nezuk, Potočari. (Bosnia)

APPENDIX D
PHOTOS

Analysis of the landscape and history class during a TEWT, Reichswald, Germany. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Museum visit and presentation at Hooge crater, Ypres area, Belgium. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Discussing ways to defend the Moerdijkbridge - an important strategic point during the Nazi-German advance to Rotterdam in May 1940. Moerdijk, The Netherlands. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Presenting a military-historical analysis, Tyne Cot cemetery, Passendale, Belgium. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Dutch veteran lights a candle at the place he was shot and a Danish soldier died, Trenica, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

The former UN compound (front) and cemetery (back) in Potočari, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Traces of Dutch graffiti at the former UN compound in Potočari, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Overgrown gravestones in Švenčionys, Lithuania, site of the manual work. *Photo: Victoria Balan*

Entrance to the Jewish cemetery in Švenčionys, Lithuania, location of the summer camp. *Photo: Victoria Balan*

Location of the summer camp in Marcevol, France. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Manual work in Marcevol, France. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Hiking the Walter Benjamin trail from Banyuls-sur-mer, France, to Portbou, Spain. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

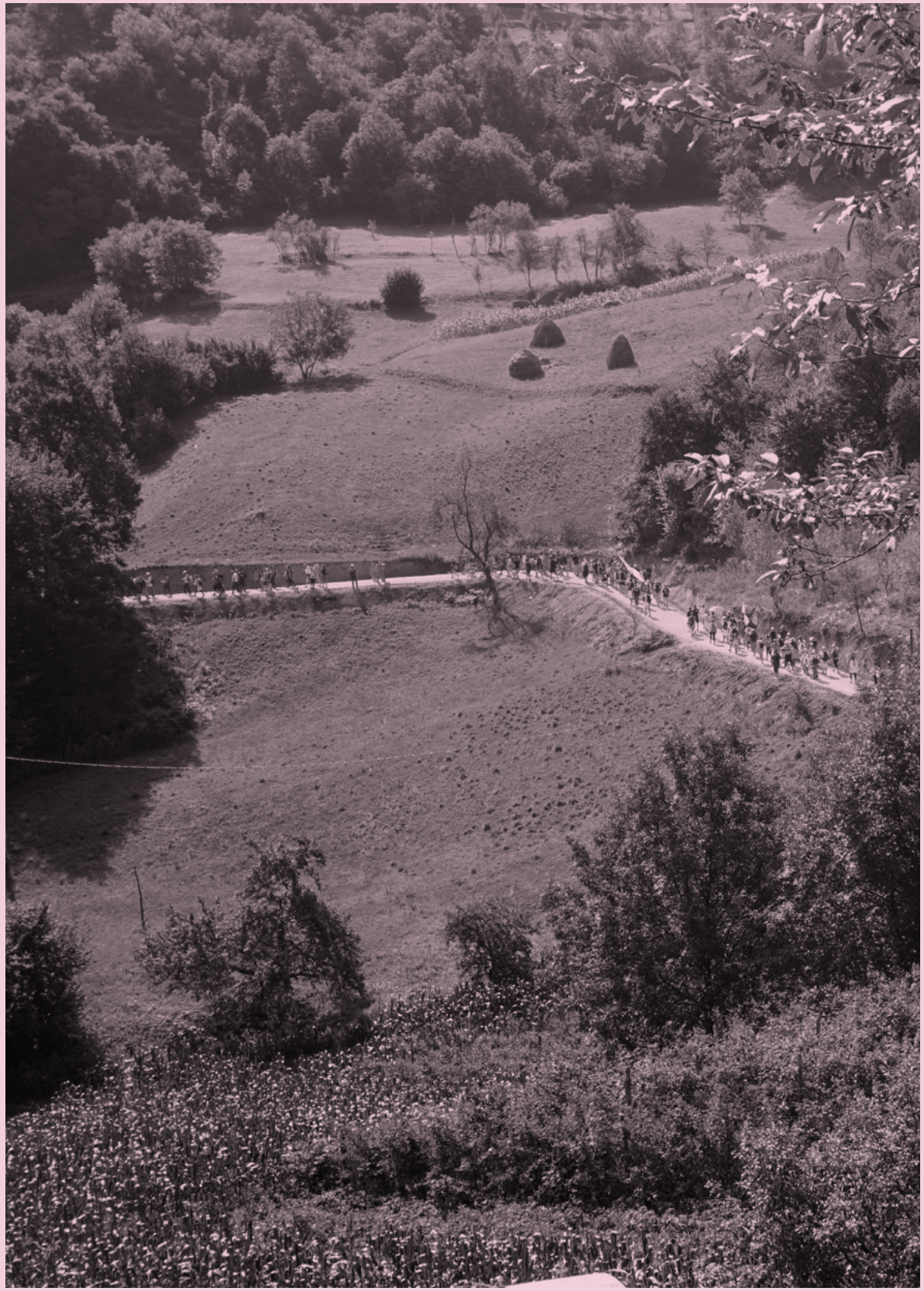
Visit to the Walter Benjamin memorial by Dani Karavan, Portbou, Spain. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Casa Giubileo, partisan refuge and memorial to the killing of a group of partisans in 1944, Montemaggio, Italy, location of the summer camp. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Workshop in preparation of an art project on the killing of the partisan fighters in Casa Giubileo, Montemaggio, Italy. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Visit to the memorial in Sant'Anna di Stazzema, Italy. *Photo: Irene Lupi*

Hiking 'like a partisan', Tuscany, Italy. *Photo: Irene Lupi*



Participants of the peace march, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Participants of the peace march, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Minefields along the route, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Participants of the peace march, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Participants of the march in front of a primary mass grave, Liplje area, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Secondary mass grave, Liplje area, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Burned out house and secondary mass grave, Liplje area, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

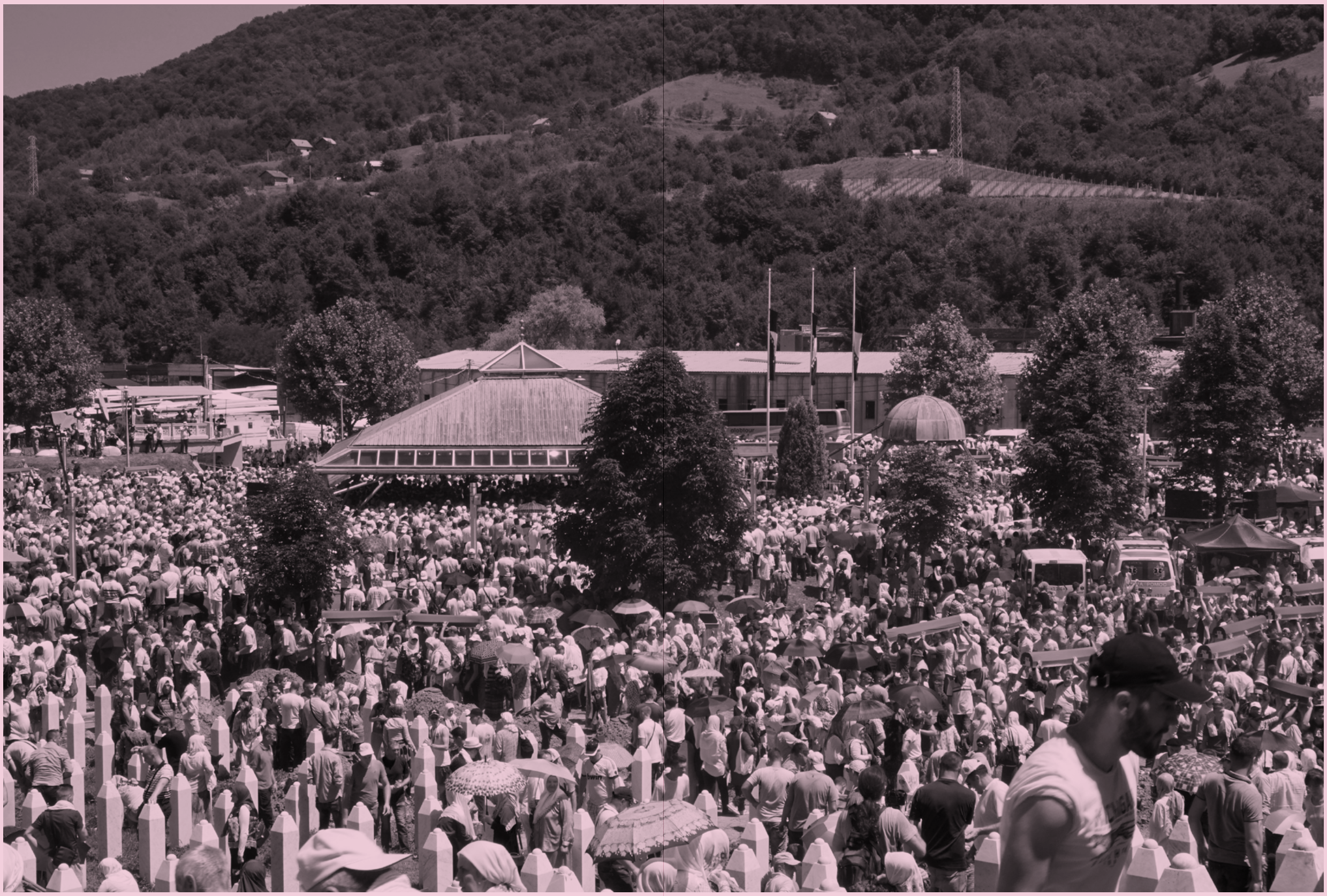
Rough trail along the route, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Minefields along the route, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Campsite of the march, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Participants enter the cemetery in Potočari. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Participants and relatives of the victims at the memorial in Potočari, endpoint of the march. *Photo: Siri Driessen*



Annual commemoration of the genocide and burial of victims in Potočari, Bosnia. *Photo: Siri Driessen*

Currently, the number of people that visit former war sites is surging. Iconic war sites, such as the Nazi German extermination camp Auschwitz, report receiving a growing number of visitors every year. This growth in the number of visitors has not gone unattended: in recent decades, the number of studies about the phenomenon of war tourism has risen as well. These studies predominantly consider tourists who visit iconic war sites all over the world and discuss the experiences of 'general' tourists. This raises questions about those visitors who are less easy to be labeled as tourists: visitors with an existing or desired personal connection to a past war or conflict. Investigating these visitors can not only deepen our insight into their specific experiences, but might also tell us more about the diversifying forms and roles of war tourism and heritage in contemporary society.

this dissertation, I study the motivations, experiences, and reflections of war tourists. I argue that war tourism should be understood as a phenomenon that revolves around the possibility of engaging with place-bound war memories and histories in an embodied, affective, and meaningful way. Through four empirical case studies, I draw an image of the way different groups of visitors motivate, experience, and value their visits to former war sites in Europe. The four case studies focus on different groups of people—groups of people that all have specific reasons to visit these sites and that seem to defy the label of the general 'day tourist': the military, volunteers, war veterans, and peace marchers. These groups of people all have an established or desired connection with particular wars and the places associated with those wars. The sites that they visited are associated with twentieth-century wars that (partially) took place in Europe: the First World War, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and the wars in former Yugoslavia.

By means of scrutinizing four specific groups of visitors, I aim to get a better understanding of the experiences of these groups, and give more depth to the concept of 'war tourism.' I provide insight into the many layers, complexities, and tensions that pertain to war tourism, and probe into the role and value of war heritage in today's society. This means that I pay ample attention to discussing the different facets and layers that constitute visitors' experiences. I approach the experience of visiting a war site as an integral part in the lives of the visitors: an experience that is anticipated, lived through, and reflected upon, and whose consequences are sometimes only understood long after the experience took place. In the dissertation, I argue that integrating theories on (secondary) witnessing, historical re-enactment, 'authenticity', affect, place, and memory in the field of war tourism contributes to existing knowledge on the appeal of visiting former war sites. War tourism is not only a very diverse form of tourism, but also fulfills a desire to engage with a war history in a personal, affective and embodied way.

Chapter 3, the first empirical chapter of this dissertation, is dedicated to military battlefield tours to former war sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France. These tours are predominantly undertaken for military educational purposes. In the chapter, I focus on the way Dutch officers and cadets experienced battlefield tours and on

the tensions that can be observed between the goals of the trips and the experiences of the individual participants. Throughout the chapter, I show that the battlefield tours helped Dutch officers and cadets to develop a specific place-bound engagement with the past. I argue that the historical landscape thereby provided external clues that assisted the participants in comprehending the course of a historical event. Moreover, the aura of 'authenticity' present on site proved to be important during the battlefield tours, as it made the presented history seem more believable and understandable. The myriad details present on site told stories that seem difficult to convey in history books, and—most of the time—helped the military visitors to achieve a more layered and complex image of the past. Also, the visual and sensual triggers at a historical site allowed for cognitive and bodily knowledge and appealed to the participants' imagination. The study indicates that the (historical) knowledge and cultural background of the participants impacted to a great extent the way they imagined the past. An interesting difference was observed between the experience of visiting former battlefields, which were sometimes quite indistinct, and the experience of visiting the more cultivated war cemeteries.

In Chapter 4, I study Dutch veterans who returned to places related to their military deployment in former Yugoslavia. I investigate their motivations, experiences, and processes of meaning making. The motivation of the returning veterans should be seen in the light of a long process of trying to come to terms with memories related to their deployment. I concluded that veterans experienced difficulties in processing their memories of the deployment, because of the negative public reception and media coverage of the Dutch military presence in former Yugoslavia. This presence is characterized by the failed protection of the Bosnian-Muslim enclave around Srebrenica and the consequent genocide. By returning to the places that were important to them during the mission, veterans hope to find meaning in their wartime experiences. In the chapter, I show that the processing of war-related memories has different phases. The first phase focuses on introspection. The second phase is characterized by opening up to family, friends, and relatives. In the third phase, veterans develop a drive to help others. Remarkably, although the veterans' motivations to return stemmed from highly personal concerns, during the return trip they also developed interest in others and educated themselves about the general history of the war in former Yugoslavia and their impact on local communities.

In Chapter 5, I analyze the experiences of participants of war-themed summer camps that focus on conserving and maintaining former war sites in Italy, Lithuania, and France. I scrutinize the motivations, experiences, and reflections of the participating volunteers. The desire for affective experiences proves to be a significant motivator for the summer camp volunteers. Saturated by information from (school)books, the volunteers of war-themed summer camps seek to learn about war and conflict in a personal, intimate, and embodied way. The opportunity to engage in volunteer work helps them to make their presence seem impactful and symbolically pay for their education and experiences on site. Yet, I concluded that sought impacts and emotions were not always found, which gives rise to tensions and feelings of disappointment. Feelings of guilt about unmet expectations causes volunteers to re-evaluate their motives and look for different ways to make the summer camps meaningful to them. Participants are encouraged to critically reflect on this form of volunteer war tourism in particular, and on societal debates about war and volunteer tourism in general.

In Chapter 6, the final empirical chapter, I focus on the Marš Mira—the yearly peace march that commemorates the genocide of the Bosnian-Muslim inhabitants of Srebrenica. I scrutinize the ritual dynamics taking place during the march and connect them to the practice of war tourism. Analyzing the march from the perspective of war tourism helps me to grasp the touristic features of the march and its participants. I show that the desire for embodied and 'authentic' experiences was present among the participating tourists. The confrontation with the touristic features of the march caused some of the participants to reflect on their visit and develop personal rituals, through which they tried to deal with the encountered war history. However, the confrontation with the many traces of death and violence along the route also seems to feed into a politicized and polarized narrative of the Bosnian war, and did not result in critical reflection. Furthermore, I argue that establishing an emotional connection with the commemorated history and related war sites along the route is important for the tourists participating in the Marš Mira. The role of establishing such an emotional connection is twofold: on the one hand, it functions as a way to become more involved in the conflict and its victims; on the other hand, emotional involvement also serves the larger purpose of memory activism performed through the Marš Mira.

In Chapter 7, I discuss the general conclusions that can be drawn from this dissertation. I argue that the motivation of visitors originates in a predetermined belief that something unique and valuable can be found at former war sites. Former war sites attract people because of specific qualities that visitors attribute to those places—qualities that are comprised of the aura of 'authenticity' that is present on site. Because of this, visitors ascribe a certain sense of truthfulness and credibility to a site, which feeds into the idea that something unique and valuable can be found on site. The experience of standing in and walking through the place 'where it all happened' while seeing, feeling, hearing, touching, and smelling the surroundings can be powerful and sometimes overwhelming. Bodily and sensorial experiences of historical places help visitors to imagine past events, identify with their actors, and re-enact their thoughts. The motivation of visitors to visit former war sites also stems from the idea that such visits have an educational value. Sometimes, visiting a former war site helped visitors to obtain a more layered and complex image of the past, because of the presence of information that is not or cannot be captured in history books, or due to the experience of standing on historical grounds. Importantly, the educational experience of visitors is influenced by the characteristics of a site and the background of the visitors, and if we define the educational value of a visit in terms of broadening one's insight into the complex and multifaceted past, my research suggests that the educational value of a visit can sometimes be questioned.

I argue that contemporary war tourism is a diverse form of tourism that is undertaken for very different reasons. These reasons range from highly personal to more professional: from processing personal memories or emotions to educational battlefield tours. However, people are drawn towards former war sites in the expectation of powerful experiences:

experiences that are meaningful and affective. The appeal of visiting war sites, in that sense, lies with the specific qualities that visitors ascribe to the sites: they embody an aura of 'authenticity' and appear to provide insight into histories of war and suffering. Adopting a role as a secondary witness engages visitors with the past and provides them with a sense of responsibility and care for the past. Throughout the dissertation, I argue that working with secondary witnessing helps us to expose some important characteristics of war tourism: the development of feelings of engagement, responsibility, reflection, and care for the visited places and histories among the war tourists, and the tensions that relate to this development. Developing engagement with war sites pertains to the expression of, and reflection on, personal and collective identities. A recurring tension in the act of visiting former war sites can be discerned between the desire to be involved with the past and the knowledge that such involvement or proximity is never entirely achievable: a visit to a former war site confirms the fact that the past lies at an unbridgeable distance from the present.

Het aantal mensen dat voormalige oorlogslocaties bezoekt neemt toe. Iconische oorlogsplekken, zoals het Nazi-Duitse vernietigingskamp Auschwitz ontvangen ieder jaar een groeiend aantal bezoekers. Deze stijging is in de wetenschap niet onopgemerkt gebleven: het aantal onderzoeken dat wordt gedaan naar oorlogstoerisme is de afgelopen jaren ook toegenomen. Deze onderzoeken gaan met name over bezoekers van beroemde oorlogslocaties over de hele wereld, worden voornamelijk gedaan vanuit het perspectief van het (duister) toerisme, en richten zich op de 'gewone' toerist. Dit roept vragen op over de ervaringen van die bezoekers die minder makkelijk te plaatsen zijn onder de noemer 'toerist': bezoekers met een bestaande of gewenste connectie met een oorlog of conflict. Het onderzoeken van dit type bezoekers kan niet alleen het inzicht in hun specifieke ervaringen, vergroten maar kan ons ook meer vertellen over de vorm en rol van oorlogstoerisme en erfgoed in de huidige maatschappij.

In dit proefschrift onderzoek ik de motivaties, ervaringen en reflecties van oorlogstoeristen. Ik stel dat oorlogstoerisme begrepen moet worden als een fenomeen dat zich concentreert op de mogelijkheid om je op een belichaamde, emotionele en betekenisvolle manier bezig te houden met plaatsgebonden herinneringen en geschiedenissen. Aan de hand van vier empirische case-studies schets ik een beeld van de manier waarop verschillende groepen mensen hun bezoek aan voormalige oorlogslocaties motiveren, ervaren en waarderen. De vier case-studies richten zich op verschillende groepen bezoekers—groepen die allemaal een specifieke reden hebben om voormalige oorlogslocaties te bezoeken, en die minder goed te categoriseren zijn als 'toeristen': militairen, vrijwilligers, veteranen, en deelnemers aan een vredesmars. Deze groepen hebben allemaal een bestaande of gewenste connectie met een bepaalde oorlog en de plekken die in verband gebracht kunnen worden met deze oorlog. De plekken die zij bezoeken zijn gelinkt aan twintigste-eeuwse conflicten die zich (gedeeltelijk) in Europa hebben afgespeeld: de Eerste Wereldoorlog, de Spaanse Burgeroorlog, de Tweede Wereldoorlog, en de oorlog in voormalig Joegoslavië.

Door deze vier verschillende groepen bezoekers te onderzoeken, vergroot ik de kennis van de ervaringen van deze bezoekers en geef ik meer diepte aan het begrip 'oorlogstoerisme'. Ik verschaf inzicht in de meerdere lagen, complexiteiten en spanningen die betrekking hebben op 'oorlogstoerisme'. Dit betekent dat ik veel aandacht besteed aan het bespreken van de verschillende facetten en lagen waaruit de ervaringen van de bezoekers bestaan. Ik benader deze ervaring als onderdeel van het leven van de bezoekers; een ervaring waarnaar wordt uitgekeken, die wordt beleefd, waarop wordt gereflecteerd, en waarvan de consequenties soms pas na een lange tijd begrepen worden. In dit proefschrift stel ik dat het opnemen van theorieën over (secundair) getuigen, historische re-enactment, 'authenticiteit', affect, plaats en herinnering in het onderzoek naar oorlogstoerisme bijdraagt aan de bestaande kennis over de aantrekkingskracht van het bezoeken van voormalige oorlogslocaties. Oorlogstoerisme is niet

alleen een heel diverse vorm van toerisme, maar geeft ook invulling aan een behoefte om op een persoonlijke, affectieve en lichamelijke manier betrokken te raken bij een oorlogsgeschiedenis.

Hoofdstuk 3, het eerste empirische hoofdstuk in dit proefschrift, is gewijd aan militaire slagveldtours naar voormalige oorlogslocaties in Nederland, België, Duitsland en Frankrijk. Deze tours worden met name ondernomen voor militaire doeleinden. In het hoofdstuk richt ik me op de manier waarop Nederlandse cadetten en officieren de slagveldtours ervaren en kijk ik naar de spanningen die waargenomen kunnen worden tussen het doel van de tours en de individuele ervaringen van de deelnemers. In het hoofdstuk laat ik zien dat de slagveldtours de officieren en cadetten helpen om een specifieke plaatsgebonden relatie met het verleden te ontwikkelen. Ik betoog dat het historische landschap externe aanwijzingen geeft die de deelnemers helpen het verloop van historische gebeurtenissen te begrijpen. Daarnaast blijkt dat het gevoel van 'authenticiteit' dat aanwezig is op de locatie belangrijk was tijdens de slagveldtours, omdat het de gepresenteerde geschiedenis geloofwaardiger en makkelijker te begrijpen maakt. De talloze details die aanwezig zijn op een plek vertellen verhalen die moeilijk te vatten zijn in geschiedenisboeken, en helpen de militaire bezoekers—meestal—om een gelaagder en complexer beeld van het verleden te creëren. De visuele en zintuiglijke stimuli maken het mogelijk om cognitieve en lichamelijke te ontwikkelen, en spreken de verbeelding van de deelnemers aan. Het onderzoek laat zien dan de historische kennis en culturele achtergrond van de deelnemers van grote invloed is op de manier waarop ze zich het verleden verbeelden. Een opvallend verschil komt naar voren tussen de manier waarop de soms vrij onopvallende slagvelden werden ervaren, en de ervaring van de meer gecultiveerde oorlogsbegraafplaatsen.

In hoofdstuk 4 onderzoek ik Nederlandse veterand die zijn teruggekeerd naar plekken die gerelateerd zijn aan hun militaire uitzending naar voormalig Joegoslavië. Ik onderzoek de motivaties, ervaringen en processen van betekenisgeving. De motivatie van de terugkerende veteranen moet worden gezien in het licht van een lang proces van pogingen om in het reine te komen met herinneringen die gerelateerd zijn aan hun uitzending. Ik concludeer dat veteranen het moeilijk hebben gevonden om hun herinneringen te verwerken vanwege de negatieve publieke ontvangst en mediabehandeling van de Nederlandse militaire aanwezigheid in voormalig Joegoslavië. Deze aanwezigheid wordt gekenmerkt door het mislukken van het beschermen van de Bosnische-Moslims in de enclave Srebrenica en de daaruit voortkomende genocide. Door terug te keren naar de plaatsen van hun uitzending hopen veteranen alsnog betekenis te vinden in hun oorlogservaringen. In het hoofdstuk laat ik zien dat het verwerken van herinneringen uit verschillende fases bestaat. De eerste fase richt zich op introspectie. De tweede fase wordt gekenmerkt door het openstellen naar familie en vrienden. In de derde fase ontstaat de drang om anderen te helpen. Het is opvallend dat de veteranen, ondanks het persoonlijke doel van hun terugkeerreis, tijdens hun reis ook belangstelling in anderen ontwikkelen en zich gaan interesseren in de algemene geschiedenis van de oorlog in voormalig Joegoslavië en zijn impact op lokale gemeenschappen.

In hoofdstuk 5 analyseer ik de ervaringen van deelnemers aan zomerkampen in

Italië, Frankrijk en Litouwen. Tijdens deze zomerkampen werken vrijwilligers aan het onderhoud van voormalige oorlogslocaties en monumenten. Ik onderzoek de motivaties, ervaringen en reflecties van de deelnemende vrijwilligers. Het verlangen naar emotionele ervaringen blijkt een belangrijke reden te zijn voor deelname aan zo'n kamp. Verzadigd met informatie uit (school)boeken willen de vrijwilligers op een persoonlijke, intieme en belichaamde manier leren over de oorlog. De mogelijkheid om vrijwilligerswerk te doen zorgt ervoor dat hun aanwezigheid impactvol lijkt en stelt ze in staat symbolisch te betalen voor het onderwijs en ervaringen ter plekke. Toch concludeer ik dat de gezochte impact en emoties niet altijd gevonden worden, waardoor er spanningen en teleurstellingen ontstaan. Schuldgevoel over onvoldane verwachtingen zorgt ervoor dat vrijwilligers hun motivatie opnieuw evalueren en op zoek gaan naar andere manieren om het zomerkamp betekenisvol te maken. De deelnemers worden niet alleen aangemoedigd om kritisch te kijken naar deze vorm van toerisme in het bijzonder, maar ook naar maatschappelijke debatten over oorlogs- en vrijwilligerstoerisme in het algemeen.

In hoofdstuk 6, het laatste empirische hoofdstuk, richt ik me op de Marš Mira—de jaarlijkse vredesmars waarmee de genocide op de Bosnische Moslims in Srebrenica herdacht wordt. Ik onderzoek de rituele dynamieken die plaatsvinden tijdens de mars en verbind ze met het beoefenen van oorlogstoerisme. Het analyseren van de mars vanuit het perspectief van oorlogstoerisme helpt om grip te krijgen op de toeristische kenmerken van de mars. Ik laat zien dat het verlangen naar belichaamde en 'authentieke' ervaringen aanwezig is onder de deelnemers. De confrontatie met de toeristische kenmerken van de mars zorgt ervoor dat sommige deelnemers op hun aanwezigheid reflecteren. Ze ontwikkelen persoonlijke rituelen waarmee ze proberen om te gaan met aangetroffen oorlogsgeschiedenis. Tegelijkertijd lijkt de confrontatie met de vele sporen van dood en geweld tijdens de route ook een gepolitiseerd en gepolariseerd narratief over de oorlog in Bosnië te voeden, en niet te resulteren in kritische reflectie. Ik stel dat het tot stand brengen van een emotionele connectie met de herdachte oorlogsgeschiedenis en de verwante plekken op de route belangrijk is voor de toeristen die deelnemen aan de Marš Mira. Maar de rol van het tot stand brengen van zo'n connectie is tweeledig: aan de ene kant functioneert het als een manier om meer betrokken te raken bij het conflict en de slachtoffers. Aan de andere kant dient emotionele betrokkenheid ook het grotere doel van herinneringsactivisme dat wordt vertoond tijdens de Marš Mira.

In hoofdstuk 7 bespreek ik de algemene conclusies die getrokken kunnen worden aan de hand van dit proefschrift. Ik stel dat de motivatie van bezoekers voortkomt uit een vooraf bepaald geloof dat op voormalige oorlogslocaties iets unieks en waardevols te vinden is. Voormalige oorlogslocaties spreken mensen aan vanwege de specifieke kwaliteiten die bezoekers aan deze locaties toeschrijven—kwaliteiten die omvat worden door het aura van 'authenticiteit' dat aanwezig is op een plek. Het staan op en lopen door de plek 'waar alles zich heeft afgespeeld', al voelend, horend, ruikend, en kijkend naar de omgeving brengt een krachtige en soms overweldigende ervaring met zich mee. Lichamelijke en zintuiglijke ervaringen helpen de bezoekers om zich de gebeurtenissen uit het verleden oor te stellen, om zich te identificeren met historische actoren, en om hun gedachten opnieuw op te voeren. De motivatie om voormalige oorlogslocaties te bezoeken komt

ook voort uit het idee dat zulke bezoeken een educatieve waarde kunnen hebben. En inderdaad, soms helpt een bezoek aan een voormalige oorlogslocatie een bezoeker om een meer gelaagd en complex beeld van het verleden te krijgen, vanwege de aanwezigheid van kennis die moeilijk in boeken te vatten is, of door de ervaring van het staan op historische grond. Maar het is belangrijk om te beseffen dat zulke educatieve ervaringen sterk worden beïnvloed door de karakteristieken van een plek en de achtergrond van een bezoeker. Als we educatie definiëren in termen van het verbreden van iemands inzicht in een complex en veelzijdig verleden, dan laat dit onderzoek ook zien dat aan de educatieve waarde van een bezoek soms ook getwijfeld kan worden.

Mijn onderzoek toont aan dat hedendaags oorlogstoerisme een diverse vorm van toerisme is, die wordt uitgeoefend om uiteenlopende redenen. Deze redenen variëren van zeer persoonlijk tot professioneel: van het verwerken van persoonlijke herinneringen of emoties tot educatieve slagveldtours. Toch lijken de meeste mensen te worden aangetrokken door voormalige oorlogslocaties in de verwachting van krachtige ervaringen: ervaringen die betekenisvol en emotioneel zijn. De aantrekkingskracht van het bezoeken van voormalige oorlogslocaties ligt in die zin bij de specifieke kwaliteiten die bezoekers toeschrijven aan de plekken: deze plekken belichamen een gevoel van 'authenticiteit' en lijken inzicht te verlenen in de geschiedenis van oorlog en lijden. Het aannemen van de rol van secundaire getuige zorgt ervoor dat bezoekers zich betrokken voelen bij het verleden en geeft ze een gevoel van verantwoordelijkheid en zorg voor dat verleden. Het ontwikkelen van betrokkenheid bij het verleden heeft betrekking op de uitdrukking van, en reflectie op, persoonlijke en collectieve identiteiten. In dit proefschrift laat ik zien dat het concept secundair getuigen ons kan helpen om een aantal belangrijke kenmerken van het oorlogstoerisme naar boven te halen: de ontwikkeling van gevoelens van verbondenheid, verantwoordelijkheid, reflectie, en zorg voor de bezochte plekken en geschiedenissen, als ook de spanningen die hiermee gemoeid zijn. Een terugkerende spanning bij het bezoeken van voormalige oorlogslocaties is te zien in het verlangen van bezoekers om dichtbij het verleden te komen, en de kennis dat zulke betrokkenheid of nabijheid nooit mogelijk zal zijn. Een bezoek aan een voormalige oorlogslocatie bevestigt het feit dat het verleden op een onoverbrugbare afstand van het heden ligt.

Siri Driessen holds a research master's degree (cum laude) in Cultural Analysis (University of Amsterdam) and BA's in History (University of Amsterdam) and Fine Arts (ArtEZ Arnhem). After completing her MA, she worked in the cultural sector for a few years. Siri returned to academia to pursue a PhD at the Erasmus School of History, Culture, and Communication. Her project Touching war was part of the Research Excellence Initiative *War!: Popular culture and European heritage of major armed conflicts*, funded by the Erasmus University Rotterdam. During her PhD, she presented her work at various international academic conferences and taught multiple courses at the faculty of Arts and Culture Studies of the ESHCC. She has been a (PhD) member of several research groups: the *Erasmus Research Center for Media, Culture and Communication, the Center for Historical Culture*, and the *Huizinga Institute*. She engaged with PhD life by being the (vice) chair of the ERMeCC PhD club, and by co-organizing multiple brainstorm weekends and literature meetings. Currently, she works as a lecturer at the ESHCC and as a researcher at the LUMC.

International peer reviewed journals

Driessen, S. (2020). Summers of war: Affective volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe. *Tourism Geographies.* DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1812111

Driessen, S., M. Grever & S. Reijnders. (2019). Lessons of war. The significance of visits to historical war sites for the Dutch military. *Critical Military Studies.* DOI: 10.1080/23337486.2019.1651044

Book chapter

Driessen, S. (2021, forthcoming). Walking the Marš Mira: War, tourism, and ritual practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In P. Post, M. Barnard, M. Hoondert & M. Klomp (Eds.), *Disaster Rituals: Practices after Disasters, Crises, Atrocities, and Violence.*

Other publications

Driessen, S. (2018). Professioneel oorlogstoerisme. *Geschiedenis Magazine 53*(4), 26–27.

Driessen, S. (2017). Politiek en persoonlijk. De Marš Mira in Bosnië. Blog for *Over de muur.*

Courses followed during the PhD trajectory

Academic

- Huizinga Institute PhD symposium. (2019) ECTS: 3
- Academic integrity (EGSH) (2019) ECTS: 1
- Cultural historical research (Huizinga Institute) (2016) ECTS: 6
- Atlas.ti (EGSH) (2016) ECTS: 1
- Cross cultural awareness and communication (EGSH) (2016)
- Dean's master class 'migration' (2016)
- Advanced qualitative methods (EGSH) (2015) ECTS: 2,5

Didactic

- How to activate students in small groups online (Risbo) (2020)
- University teaching qualification
- BKO (Risbo) (2019)
- How to accommodate student's prior knowledge (Risbo) (2019)
- Basic Didactics (Risbo) (2015)

Courses taught during the PhD trajectory

2019–2020

- Lectures and coordination of the course *Art, culture, history* (Premaster, minor)
- Design, coordination, and teaching of the course *Cultural studies* (BA 3)
- Lectures and coordination of the course I*ntroductie kunst– en cultuurbeleid* (BA 1)
- Teaching Bachelor thesis class *Culture, conflict, and identity* (BA 3)
- Supervising 11 BA theses
- Internship supervision

2018–2019

- Design, coordination, and teaching of the course *Cultural studies* (BA 3)
- Teaching Bachelor thesis class *Representations of conflict*
- Supervising 12 BA theses

2017–2018

- Design, coordination, and teaching of the course *Cultural studies* (BA 3)
- Teaching Bachelor thesis class *Representations of conflict*
- Supervising 12 BA theses

2016–2017
- Design, coordination, and teaching of the course *Cultural studies* (BA 3)
- Teaching Bachelor thesis class *Representations of conflict*
- Supervising 14 BA theses
- Supervising research internship Victoria Balan

2015–2016
- 2 Tutorials *Qualitative research methods* (BA 2)

Conference papers

2019 Memory Studies Association annual conference. Madrid, Spain (June 2019)
Organization: Memory Studies Association
Title: Summers of War. Volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe.

Memory Studies Association annual conference. Madrid, Spain (June 2019)
Organization: Memory Studies Association
Title: Users in focus: Memory consumers in academic research to popular representations of war history (roundtable with Laurie Slegtenhorst, Pieter Van den Heede & Lise Zurné).

Shadow places. Urban strategies of dealing with painful pasts. Warsaw, Poland (March 2019)
Organization: German Historical Institute Warsaw
Title: Summers of war. Volunteer tourism to former war sites in Europe.

2018 The battlefield after the battle. Lille, France (December 2018)
Organization: University of Lille
Title: Reenactment and bodily understanding: The significance of visits to historical war sites for the Dutch military (with Maria Grever).

Reenacting sensitive pasts. Rotterdam. (May 2018)
Organization: International research seminar CHC.
Title: In search of new memories: Veteran return trips to former Yugoslavia.

Spaces of war, war of spaces. Florence, Italy (May 2018)
Organization: Media, War and Conflict Journal
Title: In search of new memories: Veteran return trips to former Yugoslavia.

Dark tourism. Amsterdam (February 2018)
Organization: Atlas
Title: Trips to the Past. Veteran tourism in former Yugoslavia.

2017 Graduiertenkolleg: Transcultural memory, Amsterdam (November 2017)
Organization: Duitslandinstituut UvA
Title: Trips to the past. Veteran tourism in former Yugoslavia.

Two–way tickets: Travel, home and war. Oxford, UK (June 2017)
Organization: The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities
Title: Touching the past: An analysis of the Dutch military field trips to historical war sites.

ERMeCC lunch seminar. Rotterdam (April 2017)
Organization: ERMeCC
Title: Imagining the landscape of war. Military field trips to historical war sites.

Locating Imagination. Rotterdam (April 2017)
Organization: Locating Imagination
Title: Imagining the landscape of war. Military field trips to historical war sites.

2016 Agents through time: How do people 'make history'? Limerick, Ireland (July 2016)
Organization: COST
Title: Things become much clearer on the ground. Using the past in military exercises and battlefield tours.

UTC conference Rotterdam (May 2016)
Organization: REI project members
Title: Using and experiencing the past in military war simulations.

2015 REI kickoff conference, EUR (October 2015)
Organization: REI
Title: Touching war. Contemporary visits to twentieth–century war sites and cemeteries in Europe.