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Discussion Paper 2: Regional Consultation Report on Memorials in Sri Lanka

Radhika Hettiarachchi

June 2017

The Community Memorialisation Project, Sri Lanka

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About this note –

This is part of a series of practice notes and discussion papers that are produced by the Community Memorialisation Project. This discussion paper is a cumulative representation of five district level consultations held from September 2016 – January 2017 about the complex nature of erecting, understanding and outcomes of memorials as a part of a process of memorialisation in the post-war context. As a report of qualitative and subjective discussions on memorials, rather than statistical data, this is an impression of what Sri Lankans feel on the subject.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka has had many violent conflicts since it gained independence in 1948. The collective memory of Sri Lankans harks back to the ethnic riots of the 50s, the JVP uprisings in the 70s and 80s and the bloodiest, extended period of the 26-year civil war that ended with a resounding military victory for the Government forces. In most situations of violent conflict that ends without peace agreements, the one-sided narratives of victory lean heavily towards triumphalism. Within this context, it is necessary to create opportunities for collecting and archiving histories of individuals and groups; before memory fades, and before the dynamic context of transition in Sri Lanka changes the way people choose to remember.

The herstoryarchive.org (2012-2014) and Memorymap.lk (2015-2018) are both archives of public histories that resulted from this thought process. The stories of ordinary citizens' experiences of violence and war related to conflict(s), add, contest, and layer the official histories of Sri Lanka with personal memorialisation[i]. Taking these memories beyond archiving, the projects seek to create dialogue on the ground about public history, dealing with the past and memorialisation. It also seeks to contribute to the discourse of non-recurrence of violence, and a peaceful and just means of dealing with emerging and existing conflicts. Sri Lanka's violent and fractious past, deeply entrenched in the socio-economic, cultural and political identities of Sri Lankans, influences their needs and views on the matter. The primary questions to be considered are on the creation of public spaces for memory: Who should do this? When? How? At what level? Is this the right time for it? What should it look like? Who holds the responsibility to maintain it and tell its story?

1.1. Memorialisation in post-war Sri Lanka: An overview

In the aftermath of the war, the Government at the time constructed a series of public monuments, which were symbolic of 'victory'. Some of these were in the North, where a majority of the war affected Tamils live. Those that live in the North and East, were familiar with the strong culture of memorialisation practiced by the LTTE administration. Much like post-war memorialisation, this too, was a strong LTTE-led public relations exercise, for example, the Marveerar Naal celebration of the lives of martyrs, or various memorials to 'heroes' of the resistance[ii]. Community led memorialisation of civilian tragedies in the North or East, such as the memorial to Fr. Mary Bastian in Vangalai, were few and far between and may only have been possible because they were linked to Army or state-paramilitary crimes (and erected during LTTE rule).[iii] Civilian memorialisation as individual expression, as well as dissenting voices for memorialisation of non-LTTE individuals, particularly for the victims of LTTE atrocities was either non-existent or extremely rare. With the end of the war, destruction of martyr graveyards such as Kopai cemetery or LTTE memorials such as the Thileepan's memorial, constituted a wilful erasure of publicly expressed memory[iv]. This state-led attempt to depoliticise and disassociate memory (particularly from 2009-2015) from the narrative of a 'post-war unitary state' however, has only intensified the peoples' need for memorialisation in the North[v].

The South has had a tradition of memorialisation through physical and sometimes utilitarian structures throughout the war[vi]. Roadside bus shelters in memory of dead soldiers erected by their families and community groups dot the country. Some of the particularly valiant, such as 'Hasalaka Gamini', are immortalised as statues either with State patronage or as community-led efforts[vii]. However, civilian tragedies are less visible in State-led memorialisation except for a few examples like the Central Bank Bombing memorial[viii]. This indicates that civilians' tragedies were not given as much prominence in State-led memorialisation as military incidents, except in cases such as the Aranthalawe massacre of 33 monks[ix]. In such tragedies, highlighting the cruelty of the LTTE was a useful tactic in extending mass sympathy to mobilise the Southern populace towards supporting the State, partially due to the political ideologies and propaganda built around them. This stands in contrast, for example, to the massacre of

28 civilians just 5 months before the Aranthalawe massacre in the same village, which has no memorial - not even as a tombstone to indicate where the mass grave lies[x]. Throughout the country, there is, arguably, an over-saturation of military memorialisation as evidenced by the many memorials in Colombo and outside the capital. They are often constructed by the State without any input from the bereaved families on where or how their loss should be represented. Each is created for a different purpose and use of memory, and often repeats the names of the dead on several memorials.

Aside from the physical representation of memory and symbolic reparations of public State-led memorialisation at the community level, other forms of memorialisation do exist in Sri Lanka. The memories of the dead are referenced in the religious rites of memory – such as through the giving of alms, ritual lighting of oil lamps, poojas, memorial services, and offertory to orphanages and religious houses of worship. These are often private remembrances or, at most, community-based activities. In spirit however, this remains viable only as long as the stories of 'those who know and those who saw' are attached to the ritual, without which, when such people die, memory also dies[xi].

The change of Government in 2015, ushered in a set of Transitional Justice processes within which, memorialisation fits within the pillar of reparations. As a symbolic method of reparations, the Government has relaxed its stance on memorialisation at community and national levels, even allowing for Northern mothers to grieve during Maaveerar Naal (Martyr's Day) in November 2017[xii]. While the Reconciliation Policy developed by the Government has no reference to memorialisation[xiii], the Office of National Unity and Reconciliation lists memorialisation as one of its key areas of engagement. As yet, the Government policy on memorialisation (as a component of transitional justice and reconciliation) and its practical implications are unclear. While, space is opening up for government and CSO engagement in public memorialisation, there is very little knowledge of the level of understanding, potential challenges and the needs of public memorialisation in Sri Lanka.

1.2. Public consultations on memorials and memorialisation

In order to understand public perceptions about memorialisation, the Community Memorialisation Project conducted public consultations on memorials in five regions : Kandy, Batticaloa, Matara, Jaffna and Anuradhapura . Citizens from civil society organisations such as fisheries groups, producer groups, peace and reconciliation groups, regionally based academia, regional media, women's groups, youth groups, community leaders and elders, and clergy were invited to participate in the consultations through widespread and open invitations disseminated through community based organisations, community leaders and social mobilisers. The consultations engaged with Tamils (Northern, Eastern as well as up-country Tamils), Muslims (Northern and Eastern) and Sinhalese. The total number of participants in the consultations was275, with 133 Tamils, 111 Sinhala, and 31 Muslims. The methodology of the consultations was as follows: presentation on memorialisation practiced in Sri Lanka as well as examples of global memorials in post-war contexts; group work on specific questions about preferences for memorials in Sri Lanka; and an open discussion about the challenges, opportunities and risks of memorialisation through memorials in Sri Lanka. The process was entirely qualitative and subjective, presenting an opportunity for people's viewpoints to emerge on the issue.

The key objectives of the consultations were to understand the participants' reflections (as individuals and as community groups) on the following questions:

1. Should we forget the past, or continue to remember it for the purpose of national reconciliation[xvi] and prevention of violent conflict?

2. How do we memorialise past experiences - do we use physical or non-physical methods? What are possible negative/unintended outcomes of memorialisation?

3. Who should memorialise and at what level? Should it be community-led or national? Who decides which forms of memorialisation are valid and which are not?
4. The complexity and nature of experiences related to war and violence vastly vary. What measures could be used to accommodate this complexity in memorialisation?
5. What are the obligations and responsibilities of the government towards creating spaces for memories to be shared?

The outcomes of the five consultations are mostly without consensus. However, they highlight the various needs, impacts, expectations and contexts within which memorialisation and memorials in particular are perceived in Sri Lanka by those affected by the country's numerous violent conflicts. These disparate viewpoints documented during the five consultation meetings are collated and reflected below[xvii].

2. PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON MEMORIALS: WHY, HOW AND WHEN ARE MEMORIALS APPROPRIATE?

2.1 As part of the memorialisation process, should we create memorials and what should they be?

On average, most people consulted, believed that memorials are an important part of remembrance and memorialisation. The degree to which a memorial was deemed 'useful' depended on the experiences and motivations of the specific community group. "There is a memorial at a Sinhala village in Ampara. It reminds us of the poor youth that lost their lives to the war. There is a logic in it" said one of the participants at the consultation in Batticaloa. The perceived logic to creating memorials however was qualified further with the proviso that it should not be hurtful to the feelings of others, or incite further violence. In addition, participants had strong opinions about what the purpose of a memorial could be and what it should or should not represent in the post-war context:

- The purpose of memorials should be considered carefully:

  In general, all the consultations showed that participants believed memories, especially bitter ones, could not be forgotten.

  In the South, the following purposes can be cited for building memorials:

  - The opportunity to grieve would contribute to re-establishing dignity of people
  - A participant suggested that when confronted with an incident or memorial, what one feels "shouldn't be empathy, (but) priority should be on self-analysis. What was the part I played in this tragedy? That should be the basis of self-analysis. I believe that is a better way of doing it"
  - Memorialisation to be used only for the purpose of learning lessons for the future. Many suggested that it was this generation's 'duty' to help future generations remember past events and take decisive decisions on forthcoming issues in order to facilitate non-recurrence of violence
  - Memorials should portray the country's 'identity' although the problematic nature of a singular 'identity' was not further debated

In the Northern consultations, the following reasons were cited as the purpose of memorials:

- "They help to memorialise lost relatives"
- The mental trauma that loss and war creates can be alleviated somewhat from a memorial that offers an external repository for one's memories
- It helps to express feelings freely, particularly, as a site where grief can be shared and expressed
- It becomes a catalyst to transfer memories and stories to the next generation through conversation
- Having a memorial is a compensation (an acknowledgement of loss)
- Provides a sense of justice (a symbolic reparation)
- A memorial (especially if names and statistics are displayed) can provide real data and facts that can become lost with time, or erased intentionally
- Remembrance can contribute to national reconciliation

❍ Remembering all communities that suffered through 'common' memorials:

In the Southern consultation, the participants highlighted that, when remembering victims of conflict, all those who suffered from all community groups should be memorialised equally; all victims must be revered, at national and communal events. A Muslim participant at the Matara consultation said that "an LTTE bomb changed many lives in Godapitiya. Each year on Prophet Mohammad's birthday, the dead are remembered by the mosque. The Godapitiya community realized that memorial services were held only for Islamic victims even though there were other ethnicities affected. The participants that shared this experience came to a conclusion that when memorials are held, they should be held for victims of all races and religions". This idea of memorials that reflect 'common' narratives of suffering, or other issues (such as the missing) was echoed by the Northern consultations. Quite tellingly, however, in conjunction with this statement it was suggested that "it is very annoying for the Tamil people when the Sinhalese from the South see the water tank left there during the war [which was destroyed by the LTTE in Kilinochchi but was left to ruin as a reminder of LTTE actions against their own people by the Army]. So, the memorials should be common and not about reflecting a specific incident from the conflict"[xviii]. This indicates that memorials created from destroyed property that become part of the triumphalist 'dark' war-tourist trail for Southerners, can be insulting and hurtful to the northern Tamils. This is related to the discussion in the South that even the enemy should be respected and allowed to rest peacefully in death: "if the memorials induce pain, it is a faulty design. Just as Dutugemunu built a tomb for Elara, there should be healing".

❍ There should be memorials focusing on 'goodness':

In the Matara consultation, a few of the participants suggested that memorials could also be erected to celebrate unity, diversity, helpfulness and happy memories. Instances where communities helped each other such as in 1983, when many Sinhala families helped Tamil civilians under attack by Sinhalese mobs, were given as examples. Such distinctive incidents that happened at the village level could create "good feelings" he said. However, the notion that the Southern soldiers were 'fighting a war in the North' to free the people from the grip of the LTTE was one person's interpretation of why Southern soldiers could be memorialised in the North as an act worthy of 'merit'. The conceptualisation of 'good' therefore may

not be categorically clear or universally acceptable. Inter-faith memorials were suggested as promoting unity and a sense of peace. A Tamil participant in Ampara said that "there should not be memorials for incidents that happened, but for the changing attitudes that continuously happen in our hearts and thoughts".

- Not memorialising could result in manipulation of history by others:

  The viewpoint that those with vested interest could manipulate feelings of marginalisation was a common thread of suspicion towards those in power during the consultations: "It is important to identify who destroyed this peace... .People in power manipulate human emotions for power". This highlighted the importance of memorialisation and memorials as a process of building community-level resilience against those that can manipulate the truth. It highlighted the notion that by 'crystallising a truth' through a memorial, it would become undeniable and could not be made into a false narrative by those with vested interest.

- Memorials can be a symbol of preserving identity and expression:

  In the Jaffna consultation, some participants linked memorials to the notion of preserving history and identity. For instance a participant in the northern consultation said "Our history should be recorded to prevent it from diminishing. Our ethnic, religious and cultural identity should be preserved". This illustrates the need to consider the importance of identity when planning memorials in a post-war context, especially when marginalisation and vulnerabilities could threaten a recurrence of conflict. The expression of 'identity' was part of the purpose of a memorial for those in the North so as "to build our nation, language and community and to express our feelings openly".

- Memorials and memorialisation should not be disproportionate or it could lead to further marginalisation:

  Across the consultations, participants cautioned that certain memories, if continuously recalled without being dealt with effectively, could make an individual bitter, hopeless, vengeful and hateful. These, they suggested, were memories that must be forgotten: "The more we keep certain emotions in mind, the more we deteriorate. The more people remain in those thoughts, the tougher it will be to collectively move forward". There was concern and recognition that disproportionate access to memorialisation could intensify the vulnerabilities of minority groups. Some participants from the Matara consultation suggested that a memorial which only features one ethnic group can 'disturb' positive memorialisation and reconciliation opportunities and push society towards terrorism. A Southern participant at the Matara consultation said, "We cannot forget our past, and the story must be re-told. In the 70's and 80's after the army turned against the Sinhalese, the Sinhalese were given an opportunity to grieve their losses; however the northern community was not given the chance to grieve". In the Jaffna consultations, a participant insisted that "the sacrifice of our relatives should be remembered, for example, Maveerar Thuyilumillngkal should be built by the government". Another said that a memorial would help relieve trauma as they may "feel a bit of satisfaction when we [they] are lighting an oil lamp and crying there".

2.2. Does the current context provide the space and opportunity to create memorials?

Across the consultations, most people expressed contradictory viewpoints with regard to the suitability of the current context for the creation of memorials. This was not merely across ethno-religious, political or geographical divides, or between directly conflict-affected

or non-conflict affected populations. It was contested even within community groups that were homogeneous.

- Some believed that the time for memorials has come:

  The consultations in the North indicate that youth believe the time to build memorials is the present, as many feel the current Government's interest in Transitional Justice creates space for it. The participants from Mullaithivu felt that the present time was appropriate to build memorials because of the perception that people's lives were returning to normalcy under the promises of good governance. As such, they felt that this was a time for concessions and compromises allowing for greater space for the North's needs to memorialise. In the Eastern consultations, where all three ethnic communities were present, they suggested that the current time is most suitable, as there was greater opportunity for freedom of speech. In the Anuradhapura consultations, the participants agreed that memorialisation of brutality is important and that it is the right time to do so. Going beyond memorials, they highlighted that this could happen through programs at libraries and community awareness projects that create conversations around these memories. In the Ampara consultations, the majority of the Sinhala participants rather than the Tamil speaking participants said the time was right for memorials: "In the aftermath of the war in the North-East, before we forget our experiences, this is the time to think of those conflicts deeply. So a memorial that prompts thinking is apt. Because, every time there is an inkling of conflict, it will prompt people to think of solutions". For the Tamils at the consultation, the reasons for memorials 'now' seemed to be based on fear, mistrust and insecurity; many participants highlighted the 'good governance government' that currently prevailed as an opportunity that was perhaps temporary. This can be exemplified in one participant's statement that "the time is correct. Because the Government might change in the future and then this opportunity will be lost".

- Some believed that the present is not the right time to build memorials:

  Some participants from the Southern consultations stated that this was not the right time for memorialisation based more on the potential benefits of memorials than political space. They stated that grassroots activities and community based projects (such as 'Sirasa Gama Madden') could have greater impact on issues that are necessary and timely than memorials that give no visible material benefits to a community. One participant stated that "before the war started, there was a good relationship between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. Civil society should work towards rebuilding these relationships and coexistence rather than building memorials"[xix].

- Memorials are unnecessary and unsuitable at any time:

  In the Ampara consultations, predominantly Tamil speaking groups (a mix of ethnic Muslims and Tamils) stated that memorials were not necessary. Again, the reasoning did not seem to be an absolute rejection of the concept or need for memorials. The underlying tensions seemed to indicate insecurities of recurrence of violent conflict and the need for a longer-term approach to addressing deeply rooted impacts of war. They stated "We need to forgive each other and forget what happened. We need to unify as human beings" and "Absolutely no memorials, because memorials will only remind us of the pain over and over again. Nothing good will come of it". Some however, qualified their belief that memorials were unnecessary with statements about prerequisites: "No memorials; currently common memorials are skewed towards the Government. For it to be done right, every community's rights need to be given first. If this change doesn't happen first, memorials could

incite conflict"; "No memorials; they are a method of dividing people. They are not suitable at any time"; "No memorials; there should be peace and change in people's hearts. There is yet no true peace. Change is needed first. If not, memorials could give rise to conflict between communities".

- The significance of a memorial was more important than timing:

  In the Southern consultations, some participants did not feel that there was a specific period of time when memorialisation could be done. However, they felt that it should be done before the memory was forgotten by saying that "memorials are meant to keep our memories alive. Time is one of the most important factors in the process. When Lord Buddha came to Sri Lanka, a chaitya (stupa) was made where he appeared, and over time, the only memory left is this physical memorial". In Ampara, some Sinhala participants said the same: "There is no specific time to memorialise incidents. If the future can benefit through such memorialisation, then the time is right". Some participants suggested that memorials tend to lose their significance after a period of time. For example, in the Matara consultations, they cited 'autograph books' children fill-up when they leave school: "we do not still read the autographs taken from our friends when we left school". As such, they suggested that memorials should "be significant at a national level where memorials are taken care of and maintained". This suggests that the value of the memorial is based on the emotion it evokes after it is erected, regardless of when it was/is? erected. Significantly, it also raises questions about who should maintain and care for the memorial, for it to fulfil the desired impact for which it was originally created[xx].

2.3. Should memorials be physical or non-physical?

There were wide-ranging debates related to the positive and negative attributes of physical memorials versus those that were ritualistic, religious and non-permanent structures. In all the consultations, the debates generally resulted in a majority of the participants indicating that there should be a combination of physical and non-physical memorials at various levels. However, there were a few strong objections and opinions that highlighted the value of physical memorials over non-physical forms of memorials and vice-versa, which depended on the purpose or expected outcomes of such memorialisation.

- Memorials should be a combination of physical as well as non-physical[xxi]:

  The participants in the Northern consultations highlighted that during the war, most memorialisation opportunities were intangible and/or ephemeral due to the restricted space for memorialisation. However, practicing forms of remembrance relieved some anxiety and allowed grieving. Yet, they suggest that physical memorials are more suitable in the post-war context given that they do not become a threat to national security and reconciliation where grief could be expressed at a physical location, visible to all. The physicality of a memorial, by its very presence, captures 'loss' for those who view it and is evidence that whatever it represents 'happened'[xxii]. However, according to some Jaffna University students, memorials should be physical - "memorials should be tangible because we can revere them like religious sites, statues, cemeteries and graveyards, bus stops, schools and pre-schools built in memory of the dead". They also suggested that intangible practices of remembrance, practiced throughout by the Tamil community, should also continue such as faith based memorials (such as days of fasting, alms-giving, Kaarthikai lighting) and intangible cultural memorials (documentary films, songs about incidents, registers of events, posters and handbills that are from the war).

The Southern consultations proved similar, with both physical and non-physical memorials (religious and cultural practices) preferred in equal measure depending on the nature of the memory or motivations for remembering. A slight prioritisation for physical memorials could be noted in the discussion amongst some participants. Yet, the participants argued that non-physical religious activities could be used for memorialisation every year as a ritual. These activities might not last as long as having a physical memorial attached to such a practice (the tooth relic in Kandy was cited as a physical memorial that continues a ritualistic memorial practice). A participant added "If not for the tooth relic, one could question if certain Buddhist practices could have lasted as long as it has". Therefore, both physical and non-physical memorials are important for varying outcomes; non-physical could focus on more spiritual elements while the physical will ensure that memory lives on. The effectiveness of each would be based on individual needs. Overall, while all consultations highlighted a mix of physical and non-physical memorials that are connected to each other through ritual and practice, the following reasons were seen as requisite for physical memorials: it shouldn't be easily destroyed and therefore should have State or local government support/ patronage; it could be utilitarian so that its purpose ensures its survival such as a bus stand, a community centre or a water tank; it can ensure a transference of memory to the next generation.

- Physical memorials allow for creating conversation about conflict and its impact:

  Many participants identified deducing causal factors of past violence through community discussions as a dividend of reflecting on the past through memorials – "Different communities would identify different causal factors through their understanding of history, and though the validity of individual experiences should not be challenged, they could still be used to deduce indicators of violence in the future"; "causal factors must be taught to the next generation and they must be equipped to identify these factors and prevent the atrocities from the past repeating in their lifetime". In an instance where racial tensions re-emerge, the memorials would be a reminder of the consequences of hate, although memorials should ideally bring healing and a lesson to not repeat the root causes of conflict as seen in the past. For example, one participant suggested that "memorials could help explain how colonisation in Sri Lanka lead to racism within the communities". The youth participants at the Matara consultation said that they had learnt about the 1958 riots for the first time that day because they were in conversation with an older group. They suggested that in 20 years, there may be a possibility that the following generation might never know about the 1958 riots if there is no opportunity or trigger for such a conversation. A physical memorial therefore, was considered a perpetual conversation starter, simply because it 'was there' and unavoidably present. For example, the Matara consultations highlighted that some non-physical memorials such as the18th of May as a day dedicated to remembering war heroes could be one-sided. It also raised questions why such a day cannot be used to remember all those were affected by the war including the Tamil community. They suggested that future generations should know the impact of the 30 year war that ended on this day. However, by having a physical memorial, it would be possible to have such conversations more regularly with greater impact rather than on a designated day, even if such a day would highlight the issues related to conflict in a systematic and dedicated manner: "When we live in the present, the memorials must also be relevant to the present. The reconciliation and healing that comes from these kinds of memorials will automatically be transferred from one generation to another".

- Non-physical memorial practices are visually more peaceful and promote healing:

  Some participants suggested that religious activities for memorialisation, such as children dressed in white, holding candles is a more profound way to remember all those who died from the war. it was suggested that such processes might reinforce non-violence in one group while mediating healing in another more powerfully than a physical memorial, could. However, when memorialising a past incident, the participants believed it could be controversial if associated religious activities were conducted only in one faith when the country is multi-religious. The added that the ideal non-physical, religious memorialisation could be simultaneous engagement across all religions to discuss and deal with past violence. In Matara, some participants suggested that ritualistic memorialisation practices could be more effective. For example, in 2004, the tsunami affected thousands of people: "but there is a village in close proximity to the Walawe river where no human or animal life was lost because the river overflowed just before the tsunami. As a result, people were able to flee from the destruction that flattened their village. The village community now thanks the river each year for saving their lives by lighting lamps". The participants also suggested that non-physical methods of memorialisation could be better suited for individual and personal remembrance, especially for personal relief and self-satisfaction. Another potential benefit of focusing on non-physical methods of memorialisation was highlighted in the Anuradhapura consultations. Some participants suggested that religious or ritualistic remembrance (the yearly pilgrimages to Ruwanweliseya, for example) could help with cultural continuity after war. Such practices could support memorialisation, because it can contribute to the process of re-developing societal connections and cultural identities post-war.

- Rehabilitating existing structures as physical memorials to the war:

  According to some Southern participants, there is potential use for existing archaeological sites and evidence as memorials - "All of Sri Lanka's ethnicities have a past which could be proven through archaeological evidence". This could include destroyed, ruined or dilapidated memorials. They stated that in the past, the army took over Northern memorials while the Southerners watched as by-standers and that "this practice was not correct in a democratic country and it brought negative international attention to Sri Lanka". As such, even rehabilitated memorials and archaeological sites could become physical memorials to the war, they suggested. Referring to 'cultural continuity' after a socio-cultural breakdown, they highlighted that Sri Lankan museums have artefacts from the last kings of Sri Lanka, which they believed to be reminders of a glorious history. They suggested that these could be used to connect people to their shared 'glorious' past. However, a caution was added that for a memorial of this nature to have a positive impact over time, and remain relevant, it should be conceptually profound and "be made after considering all positive and negative interpretations".

- Cultural and literary memorials:

  When 'culture' is used to create a memorial, it is different to a physical memorial or a transient, structure-less, ritualistic memorial practice. It can outlast physical memorials in the imagination of the public and trigger conversations for generations to come[xxiii]. Many stated that when literary memorials are created, they can be stored at locations where they are freely accessible to the public, such as national archives, libraries, universities and museums. For example, a discussion about culture and literature in the Southern consultations resulted in a participant suggesting that the Mahawamsa is an example of the importance of preserving memories through literature by saying that "The Mahawamsa was written as a

guide to good governance... .If rulers governed as is written in the Mahawamsa, we would not be facing such tragedies now...and in the process of studying literature, an element of humanity might emerge over (our understanding of) ethnic and religious identity".

2.4. At what level should memorials be located?

Across the consultations, on average about half the participants, stressed the importance of remembering Sri Lankans of all races who died in the war with memorials at both national and communal level. Tamils predominantly believed that national level memorials must be erected by the State indicating a need for acknowledgment. At the community level, most participants from all consultations believed that the Government should be willing to support and enable community-led memorials to remember people, personal experiences and village-level incidents. Because of the didactic potential of memorials to engage future generations in conversation, many believed that citizens should be actively engaged in national reconciliation consultations as well as community level memorialisation and ensuing discussions.

- Memorials should be primarily a community-led process located and driven locally:

  The Matara consultations, while not disagreeing with Government-led national memorials, still stated that community level memorials and memorialisation would be best. Participants believed that memorials should start at the community level and progress to the national level. A participant stated that "family members and loved ones of those who died during the war must be given the space to initiate the memorialisation process because feelings are strongest at communal level.... These memories should be brought to the national level, where the State sponsors 'remembrance of the past' as a formal event". On a similar note, in the Northern consultations, it was interesting to note that all the participants from Mullaithivu said memorials should be built at community level, as it is the community that knows their suffering and experiences, and would protect and honour the memorials on a daily basis. Furthermore they felt that if memorials are built at the community level, then it might not be disgraced or defaced by outsiders and will retain its sense of dignity (of those lost as well as of the community). However, the idea that "no incident is isolated, therefore, how can one separate it from the larger context?" was a key, contradictory question that emerged from the discussions. This lead the participants to discuss the need for memorials to make 'sense' at a community level and the need to reflect a larger purpose or issue. Some believed that if national level memorials are to be erected they should include religious teachings as "all religions practiced in the country preach that others should be treated with dignity and respect, even if this is not practiced now". A combination of approaches was proposed (community led and located memorials, religious activities, and cultural practices) with religious activities taking precedence. A day dedicated to war heroes along with alms-giving, pirith and lighting oil-lamps was suggested in Anuradhapura as practices that would simultaneously ease the suffering of those alive, while providing 'merit' towards attaining nirvana for those who had died.

- Memorials should be physically located where they can have the most reconciliation and political impacts:

  Those with specific grievances (particularly in the North) felt that community level memorials and memorialisation should not equate the prolonged experiences in the North with the experiences of violence and conflict in the South. This necessitates a nuanced understanding that while all have experiences of war and violence, there are varying degrees of such experiences, varying degrees of psychological, political and socio-economic impact, and varying degrees of political, psychological and socio-economic needs. They alluded to the notion of 'in-groups'[xxiv] by stating that

when a memorial is built within the same community where an incident happened, it is better for teaching the next generation about it, because the stories associated will be passed down and will not disappear. Meanwhile a visibly distraught Tamil mother disagreed that memorials should be at the community level. She stated categorically that memorials about "what happened in the North" should be made and located in the South by the State, so that those living in the South might understand and become aware of the incidents, losses and pain of the Northern people. The idea of the South commemorating the lost youth of the North, gave her a sense of relief at being acknowledged by the people and the State, and that in doing so, they were accepting what was as undeniable truth to her. The perspectives of the Jaffna youth in particular, were all in favour of national level memorials as they believed this would be a recognition of people's grievances and would then enhance freedoms at the community levels to develop community-led memorials. The youth participants also perceived such national-level monuments with State patronage to be 'secure' and thus protected as historical narratives rather than alternative memories of a specific segment. Yet again, the need for State acknowledgement and endorsement signifies that for the narratives of Tamil people to be validated, they feel it should be recognised at a national level. It indicates the insecurity they may feel within the larger, post-war context that promotes single narratives, which often gloss over the specific experiences of the North.

The Southern consultations were interesting in this regard, as they seemed to understrand the potential harm that ill-conceived locations for memorials could have on reconciliation. In Kandy, the participants suggested that in the Eastern and Northern provinces, what the Tamil people see as national memorials are those that were put up by the army (the memorial at the entrance of Mullivaikal was cited as an example). The Matara participants engaged in a prolonged debate about the 'Hasalaka Gamini memorial museum'[xxv] at Elephant Pass. They believed that memorials to Southern heroes located in the North could heighten feelings of loss and suffering. A participant highlighted that Hasalaka Gamini, though a hero for the Sinhalese community, was not a hero for the Tamil community. He said "his statue might offend the Jaffna community, even though the Tamil people may be against the LTTE. It could even diminish the value of the Southern soldiers who sacrificed their lives to free the North". They cautioned, that 'being the vanquished' while the victor puts up statutes of Southern heroes could cause harm, pain, and more importantly, incite future violence as a result of a vulnerable and marginalised community feeling even more helpless. Another participant added, "even Buddhism preaches reconciliation, not just between communities but in one's personal life. We must not just preach reconciliation but practice it as well". They further highlighted that grassroots level conversations and awareness such as their discussion should be carried on to the national level: "the leaders must take responsibility to implement our recommendations and set an example to the country".

3. PEOPLE'S VIEWS: COULD MEMORIALS EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS PREVENTNING VIOLENT CONFLICT IN FUTURE?

3.1. Would memorials be helpful in preventing conflict and contribute to reconciliation?

In the Southern consultations, most participants agreed that reconciliation should be a lively, pro-active, humane process. They suggested that caution must be taken when reflecting on the past "because of the possibility of it leading to terrorism". In Kandy, the

participants suggested that as destruction and loss was experienced by all communities, memorials should be designed so that they give everyone a clear and commonly acceptable message that there should never be a repetition of past tragedies. However, participants in Southern consultations suggested that certain memories. In the Northern consultations, most participants stated that memorialisation [not specifically memorials] will contribute to national reconciliation, while a few stated that it will create an adverse effect on national reconciliation. Some participants stated that memorials will contribute towards reconciliation if they are built without giving priority to one ethnic group, religion or language, such as those that remember all those who died during the war. The participants from Kilinochchi further suggested that "if a memorial is built to reflect all ethnicities rather than just one of them, its durability would be assured", alluding yet again to the insecurity of Tamil people's narratives unless they are encased within another, more dominant, more acceptable narrative.

Some participants believed that it was the responsibility of racial and religious groups to gather the truth with equal representation of stories, evidencing that "if our communities are diverse, our stories would be just as diverse." In the Matara consultations, people displayed awareness that 'history' is represented and manipulated by those with the 'power' to write it - "Mahawamsa, which is the most prominent document on Sinhalese history, was essentially written by one single monk whose message has influenced generations of Sinhala ideologies. Sri Lankan history was also written by outsiders whose biases could have influenced how we study our past". The fair representation of each community in history could lead to reconciliation they suggested. However, the idea of who should determine fairness or what could be considered equal representation or how equality may not be the same as equity, was not discussed further.

3.2. Would memorials about the brutality of violence prevent its recurrence?

- Memorials of incidents are preferred over statues of people:

  In the Matara consultations, the memorialisation of individuals and its potential negative impacts, was discussed in relation to the Hasalaka Gamini memorial: "In terms of memorialising past heroes, we remember Hasalaka Gamini but not the Tamil boy who drove the war tank which he bombed". The story focuses on an isolated heroic incident but does not focus on the brutality of the enemy. The participants argued that the context of violence must be considered for memorialisation without sanitising the brutality of 'terrorism' or violence in favour of 'heroism'. Some suggested that violence could be reignited by memorialising brutality: "Memorialising a natural disaster such as the Tsunami would not have a negative impact, but on the contrary, if a memorial of Prabhakaran portraying him as a hero was set up, there would be a negative impact when we continuously expose and explain this memorial to young children". They articulated the potential for children to generate hatred of another community if they were exposed to stories of murder and brutality without qualifications of why such incidents happened and the human cost of violence on all Sri Lankans. Therefore, even though remembrance through memorials is important, they cautioned that memorials portraying brutality are detrimental to peace. Some participants argued that since memorials which directly resemble events from the war could be quite painful, a more useful memorial such as a building could be dedicated to the person or incident in question: "If a statue or similar memorial is made, it will degrade and get wasted if not maintained, such as the statues we see on the roads, covered in animal droppings. This could be replaced with a more useful physical memorial which could also not induce hate".

- Should the Sri Lankan government allow memorials of non-State armed groups :

  With regard to memorialising LTTE soldiers in the North, a participant from Matara suggested that there should be space to remember the atrocities of war irrespective of the good and the bad. However, he suggested that when memorialising terrorism for the future benefit of the country, Sri Lankans must first decide on what a good approach to such memorialisation could be. This definition, he believed, should then be accepted by the public and integrated into society. Once society has understood the premise of good memorialisation practices, they will not be manipulated by public figures such as politicians who place memorials in their area with a hidden agenda: "Since people do not understand that memorials should have a positive outcome, they believe and accept any message given by their ministers". In this context, the group agreed that hypothetically, even Prabhakaran [the LTTE leader] could be remembered, if it was contextualised as historical and not with reverence and hero-worship.

4. PEOPLE'S VIEWS: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO MEMORIALS

Several topics emerged during the consultations that do not relate directly to the purpose, sequencing and design of memorials. These, presented below, are related to the socio-political context, political positioning and power brokering and lagging, systemic and unaddressed issues with which the Government engage.

4.1. The erasure of memorials and military involvement in memorialisation.

Military involvement and continued engagement in memorialisation processes needs to be acknowledged, genuinely assessed for its positive and negative impact and considered in future memorialisation supported by the State and civil society organisations.

- Militarisation and destruction of memorials:

  Participants across the consultations stated that before moving towards memorialisation, there are other factors that the Government needs to address (although they may be different for Northern and Southern participants). For example, a Tamil participant stated that northern burial grounds being in army territory was not conducive to reconciliation: "The country must realise certain truths such as the cost of weapons, and the cost of young Sinhalese and Tamil lives. There was an LTTE memorial at the cemetery at Alambil, Mullaitivu. It was completely destroyed and the cemetery was dug up by the army. The people are afraid to move about at night because they believe that if memorials are destroyed no one will remember the dead". Several times during the consultations, the militarisation in the North emerged as an issue that needs to be resolved if the Government was serious about reconciliation; as such, demilitarisation in the North maybe a prerequisite for memorialisation for some. For example, a participant stated that "The people don't trust the Government. The Government has destroyed all the memorials in fear because they believe people might remember the war if they see memorials. In the Eastern and Northern provinces, what the Tamil people see as memorials are what the army has erected...particularly, the one which is erected at the entrance of Mullivaikal". However, since 2016 the Government has begun demilitarising the North and has started releasing civilian land previously held within military control[xxvi]. The consensus was that there should be wide public consultations about memorials to ascertain the need for memorials and what can be done with existing memorials erected by the army.

- Perceived hypocrisy of military involvement in memorialisation:

  A participant from Matara described how he believed the war has changed people's perspectives of the army: "In the 1970s and 1980s, the army had traumatized and murdered Sinhala youth, and young people then, hated the army. But overtime, the same army that killed Sinhalese were revered by the Sinhalese for defeating terrorism". A discussion ensued about the traumas inflicted by the army on the Sinhalese then, which was being inflicted on the Tamil community now by militarised groups including the LTTE: "The army inflicted trauma on the Sinhalese based on political orders, and so Prabakaran is no different to Sinhalese politicians who manipulated the public and distorted national unity". Another participant pointed out that 'heroes' would be different for various communities, which is why memorialising heroes must be done with caution, and more preferably at community level rather than at national level. The participants seemed to be aware that the ability of the Southerners to accept killing LTTE soldiers (and Tamil people as collateral damage of war), seemed to be culturally ingrained as a victory over terrorism. in this regard, a participant stated that "there was a time in history where the Sinhalese community openly insulted the Tamil community with phrases such as 'go back to Jaffna', and this oppression is what has resulted in conflict. The generation that oppressed [them], lost many sons to the war. These incidents must be exposed, and discussed. Only then will memorialisation bring reconciliation". Similarly, in the North, the perceived hypocrisy of memorisation in the context of the military was discussed. Many stated that they could not trust a Government or a military that once destroyed the burial grounds of their loved ones and their monuments, to lead memorialisation in the post-war context.

- Commemorating the end of the war and war-heroes:

  A few questions and concerns were raised about "why it was so wrong to commemorate the victory of the military over the LTTE and the eradication of terrorism?", especially in the context of honouring the sacrifices of military personnel and their families. While this highlights the insecurity felt by military families about the legacy of their relatives as 'war-heroes' being tarnished by what is perceived as an over-burdening of human rights perspectives on past incidences, it might also account for fears about pensions and compensations they might lose if heroes become villains during the transitional justice process. For example, one participant suggested that the "Southern soldiers sacrificed their lives to liberate and save the Northern people from the LTTE", and that this should be commemorated. Some expressed disappointment that the 'Victory Day' celebrating the official end of the war on 18th of May, was changed to 'Remembrance Day' thereby 'stripping away' from the sacrifices and honour of the military. This is a delicate and politically controversial aspect of 'erasure' and military involvement in memorialisation, that requires more sensitisation, public consultation and understanding.

4.2. Ethno-political dimensions of memorialisation need to be considered:

Many believed that there was rising tension between the Buddhist and Muslim communities, especially in the South and East. Since these tensions still exist, the relevance of memorialisation at this point in time must be extensively reviewed to avoid any memorials negatively feeding into new issues. A participant in the South suggested that "If building memorials is left to the Government, there is a chance for a new issue to emerge; so it is much wiser if civil society takes over the role of putting up inclusive memorials". The Southern participants were more concerned about the politicians and the possibility of manipulations that could affect the reconciliation processes: "During the war, there were Sinhalese and Tamil families that were killed. In rural villages, there were many Sinhalese families that were killed.

However, it seems as if these deaths are not acknowledged, as they should have rightly been and these events will not allow certain groups to move away from racism. We should have more open conversations to help everyone identify who has suffered. We cannot leave it to politicians as we have seen how they can divide the country for their own personal gain". The participants further discussed the need for public consultations as a preventative strategy for politicisation and manipulation preying on people's fears and ignorance. They suggested that before memorials are constructed there should be discussions in the potential localities about what type of memorial (if at all) local residents need in order to prevent negative impacts of ill-conceived memorials, which was a sentiment also echoed in the North.

The Northern participants stated that there should be an effort to rebuild places of religious worship and the lack of attention to rebuilding these at the moment, could cause tensions. They felt increased anger and hurt "due to the destruction of memorials and Sinhalese settlements in the North. Equal rights for memorialisation is not given to us, as it is available for those in the South even though we have undergone untold losses due to the war. When statues of forces are erected while our rights to enjoy the same is prevented, then it can cause negative repercussions". They felt that such tensions were connected to politicisation: "when we look back at the history after independence, every effort the politicians took to manage the situation here, lead to violence. We have to remember this". Further criticism of perceived manipulation by politicians was alluded to: "memorials should portray that all are heroes and all are victims. In terms of politics, it might be challenging to put up such inclusive memorials due to the political tendency to promote division".

4.3. The role of the State in furthering reconciliation through memorialisation:

The participants from the North were vocal on the issues of human rights, transitional and restorative justice, acknowledgement for those affected by war, and what was considered due process in memorialisation by saying that: "When our rights are secured, then reconciliation will happen"; "The Government should provide permission to build memorials as it is about what happened in the past"; "The Government should carry out a proper assessment of loss and provide due justice for affected people". The onus for delivering an impartial and just process of acknowledgement through memorialisation was firmly placed on the Government: "The Government should act impartially in the memorialisation process. Then the majority community will understand about the injustices that happened to the Tamil community through memorialisation, if they care about us. This would contribute to reconciliation". Tamil people see the need for acknowledging injustices and mourning loss as a stronger need within a reconciliation process. In comparison, in the South, the urgency and the need for significant affirmative action towards the Tamil communities specifically, was secondary to the idea of equality as evidenced by this statement by a participant: "Memorialisation could be used to validate the rights of all groups, by mourning all the people lost during the war". This however, could be questioned as a voice of privilege that has had opportunities for memorialisation throughout the war. Yet, significantly, it is also the voice of a community group that has been denied memorials of violence and loss during the period of the JVP insurrections in the 70s and 80s.

4.4. Forced disappearances and memorialisation:

One of the concerns cited predominantly by Northern participants was the issue of disappearances. Some participants came to the event, to speak about their missing children even if the purpose of these consultations were clearly shared prior to the event, highlighting the pervasive and persistent tension that parents of the disappeared feel. Some of their concerns included the following questions: How does one memorialise the missing when they are neither dead, nor alive for the parents? And is a memorial to the missing adequate to quench the continuing trauma of the families of the missing? It is clear that the role of the

State in answering questions about the missing, cannot be ignored, especially in the context of memorialisation and reconciliation.

4.5. Restoration of property and economic development:

A key grievance of the Tamil community that emerged at the consultations in the North, was that the Sinhalese parents who lost their sons received compensation, and in the case of parents of army personnel, they receive a regular pension. This, they claim was not the same for bereaved Tamil parents. They stated that economic development, restoration of property, compensation for losses, employment and support for small businesses were immediate needs, and must be considered alongside efforts such as memorialisation. The formation of strong community groups, as key stakeholders as well as interlocutors for engaging the Government on the current socio-economic and reconciliation needs, will be extremely important in this process. Many felt that economic support such as improving agriculture and supporting SMEs would reduce the tendency for conflict in the future. In the South, the lack of compensation for civilian losses (due to bomb blasts, ravages of war on the East's irrigation systems or farming communities), as well as the lack of economic development (again, particularly in the East) were seen as the Government eschewing their responsibilities in favour of transitional justice for the North/Tamil people. Such interpretations of favouritism, and the realities of being a marginalised and economically lagging Sinhala community in the East, seemed to make them vulnerable to nationalist agitators. At a national level, poverty and economic conditions that go unaddressed for Sinhala and Tamil marginalised groups, further exacerbate the mistrust and tensions that already exist between these communities in the post-war context. As already visible in the current context, both sides could become malleable and easy targets for nationalists and demagogues. Many suggested marrying development needs with memorialisation and memorials: Infrastructure projects could be in memoriam to an incident or person(s) that died during the war; empowerment and employment generation projects along with educational projects could be non-physical forms of memorialisation in commemoration of an incident or person(s). [Please see attached annex for examples of people's suggestions]

4.6. The Indian (up-country) Tamil community is left out of conflict-related memorials:

At the Kandy consultations, up-country plantation Tamil community's needs emerged as one of the main issues of memorialisation, reconciliation and justice in the region. They stressed the need to include the stories, grievances and needs of the plantation community, as a mainstream, conflict affected community with a long history of marginalisation: "Why haven't their stories been included? There is no information about the up-country people who were affected by the 1983 riots and who went missing during the war. In the 1930s it was the up-country people that settled in Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar. They were displaced again in the 1960s. After 10 or 20 years from now, they will disappear. The memories will disappear with them". The grievances were not only related to conflict but also to the socio-economic conditions that they felt, further marginalised the group: "Their ETF and EPF were not received. Public property was damaged. The plantation village people's basic rights were not given. They are economically backward and they are in the political wilderness. Their homes are not their own. At this point, we have to also remember that under the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement, most of them were deported from this country". The inclusion of the up-country Tamil populations in processes of post-war reconciliation, economic development, memorialisation and education is clearly imperative, as they are also directly conflict-affected.

4.7. Education and the use of memorials for learning:

In all the consultations the link between memorials, memorialisation and education emerged. This relates to the discussion about the didactic purposes of memorials as a tool to influence the next generation about the perils of war, and as a catalyst for a public discourse on war, reconciliation, peace and justice. In relation to memorials, memorialisation and reconciliation, many suggested necessary improvements to the formal and informal systems of education: Reforming the school curricula to reflect and use memorials to understand 'why' conflicts happened; building awareness and understanding of cultural diversity; learning each other's language to prevent miscommunication; and emphasising co-existence and reconciliation through education. Many people highlighted the need for a common understanding of the term 'reconciliation' before introducing it to the education system in order to ensure that the definition and purpose of reconciliation itself, will not lead to conflict between people[xxvii].

5. SUMMARY, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the context of formal transitional justice mechanisms, memorialisation is an important component of symbolic reparations. Within this process, the construction, revitalisation and role of memorials as a reconciliation and peace-building tool, necessitates a better understanding of people's needs and perceptions about memorials in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the culture of memorials and monuments as testimonials, centres of heritage and unity, remembrances and displays of power are familiar sights at national and community levels. However, in the post-war context, the inter-sectional nature of a memorial takes on a politicised and highly contested space, which further requires people's consultations and deeper analysis.

Chief amongst these considerations is the question - do Sri Lankans believe that there is a need for memorials? If they do believe there is such a need, then is this the correct time to build memorials? If this is the correct time, then what should they be, where should they be and who should build them? It is clear from the consultations that most people believe memorialisation and remembrance to be necessary. There is however, no consensus that memorials are a necessary and apt form of such memorialisation. Generally, the Tamil communities would prefer physical memorials while the Sinhala communities would prefer non-physical, religious and cultural forms of memorialisation. Even within these larger groups, there are contrary views about when such memorials or memorialisation should happen. In general, participants either believed that the present time is apt (mostly because of the change in Government in 2015 and the perception that this change creates possibilities for transitional justice), while others feel that there are necessary prerequisites before the context is conducive for genuine memorialisation. This includes demilitarisation, socio-economic development, addressing language barriers, confidence building between the ethnicities, the rehabilitation of erased or dilapidated memorials and answers about the disappeared. Special considerations such as the inclusion of up-country Tamils in the memorialisation process, as well as making the education system more suited to reconciliation and co-existence were highlighted. Negative associations related to memorials in the war-era and confusion about the sequencing of memorials within the transitional justice process, indicates that unless memorials are grass-roots initiatives emerging at community or village level, they should not be imposed by civil society, government or independent memorialisation projects at the present time.

The perceived purpose of memorials needs further clarification as it varies based on ethnicity, location, experiences of violence and war, and transitional justice needs. Various purposes for memorials were cited including their ability to promote healing and conversations about the meaning of incidents, as representations of truth and identity, as catalysts for inter-generational transfer of memory, as didactic tools, as symbols of reconciliation or

justice, as political statements of power or of resistance, as public history, as statements of regret or acknowledgement, and as warnings against future possibilities of violence[xxviii]. For the Tamil communities, one of the key purposes of a physical memorial is that it is the State's acknowledgement of the losses and sufferings of the Tamil people at least in lieu of accountability. It is cited above the need for restorative or punitive justice in the hierarchy of perceived needs. This need for acknowledgment through memorialisation is similar in the South, where the onus is on the Government to respond to the many unanswered questions about the period of JVP uprisings. However, in accepting acknowledgement as justice, the need for a nuanced sense of justice that allows for plurality of experiences and plurality of needs still remains unaddressed. Until and unless this plurality of needs and nuances of justice can be adequately understood and addressed, and people are truly ready to accept that multiple narratives and needs exist, as a tool for justice or reconciliation, memorial-building may not be useful. This does not however imply that all communities should reach a consensus on what should be memorialised and arrive at an expected outcome that is 'common'. Unfortunately, in imperfect democracies emerging from conflict, 'consensus-building' might result in the rejection of minority needs in favour of a common denominator. This, in turn, essentially deprioritises marginalised and outsider narratives. Even within a community group, the plurality of ideas of what a memorial should be, or if it is needed at all, gets lost in the 'majority' view (thereby effectively erasing the 'subjective' and the agency of individuals).

The debate about memorials cannot be discussed in isolation without situating it within the larger context of a memorialisation debate. While there was no consensus, or further clarifications on the purpose, definitions and needs of various stakeholders, the following questions did emerge: How do power dynamics affect and impact the way community members consider their experiences as isolated incidents versus part of a series of incidents situated within a larger, national context of war? If an unpleasant memory does not induce the emotions required for reconciliation, could it serve the purpose of memorialisation as a catalyst for reconciliation? As historical representation of ethnic differences or aggression might influence nationalism, fear and prejudice between ethnicities in the present day, is it ethical to assess personal histories for its impact on race relations and only document them in a manner that ensures productive learning? If a political statement represented by a memorial for one group causes hateful sentiments in another, is the solution to attach 'fair[xxix]' descriptions to the memorial so that it is not open to interpretation; or is the conversation about its meaning more important for learning? How can memorials induce empathy and a sense of humanity in their design or should they not attempt to frame the narrative in such a manner? What is the legal status of memorials? Are there any laws that can set precedents on how people can be held responsible for the use, misuse, disrepair and disfigurement of memorials? These unresolved questions about memorials need further understanding and study before memorials can be considered in earnest.

The consultations have clearly showed that there are conceptual challenges and tensions in dealing with memorials. One of the challenges of building memorials is that they are invariably subject to the politics of 'now'. The present conditions influence perspectives of the past and affect the process of dealing with such memories and their impacts. This dissonance between what is held deep within an individual or a community group will influence the presentation and the prioritisation of such deep-rooted memories in the public sphere. The public may require further time and distance from the incidents, in order to fully understand the sequencing, uses and impacts of building memorials. However, there is also a danger in delaying memorial-building, as the delay in itself may diminish the need for them due to circumstances and narratives changing over time. Transitional justice needs may move lower down the hierarchy as security needs (physical, political, economic) become more dominant as time passes. One possible solution suggested to capture 'withheld memories' was to create memorials to 'types of injustices' such as displacement or disappearance. In creating such 'common' categories of memorials, it was assumed that what is lost as

unique and subjective experiences may at least be represented through aggregation. This is problematic because aggregation essentially rejects localised stories in favour of larger narratives. However, while formal processes and Government interventions in the field of memorialisation are deliberated, perhaps memorialisation that is developed with bottom-up agency with and without the framework of 'projects' may have to fill this gap in the interim[xxx]. Yet, this solution of leaving memorialisation of 'unique' narratives to communities, assumes that local agency is adequate for memorialisation at community level without factoring in the politics that constrain such spaces. Hence, the glorification of the 'local' within the field of memorialisation and reconciliation, may not account for the lack of sensitisation or skills about memorialisation, or the democratic, public discourse necessary for a community to authoritatively and pluralistically address their own past through memorials. Civil society and community-led projects that attempt to empower a community group to deal with their own memorialisation may also perpetuate structural and patriarchal issues, power imbalances and potential manipulation by local leaders. As such, the field of memorialisation in Sri Lanka requires considerable skill-building and longer-term processes and protocols for engagement.

The consultations proved that while memorialisation is important for most, for some, there is a need to move on and focus on immediate needs. For those that want to forget due to socio-economic, security concerns or psychological reasons, memorials can be the trigger for recurring pain. There is violence inherent in re-opening old wounds and re-awakening trauma with no recourse to solutions for deep rooted injustices or closure. Memorials crystallise a moment in time that does not allow healing through the natural erosion of memory. Perhaps, in a post-war context, reminders of violence for the purpose of non-recurrence out-weigh the philosophical discussion about the nature of memory and forgetting. However, this is problematic in the Sri Lankan context, as healthcare systems are ill-equipped to handle psychological needs for dealing with the past and overcoming related trauma. In addition, for effective management of trauma, the social stigma attached to mental health issues is prohibitive. In such a context, creating memorials without the necessary safety nets could be considered irresponsible.

Issues about the life cycle of a memorial can also be inferred from the consultations. A memorial is relevant and 'speaks to' an 'in-group' of people that find meaning and relevance attached to it. As long as a memorial can be explained and examined with narratives and stories of those who experienced its significance, it has life. But when such an 'in-group' is no longer alive, then does the memorial lose much of its meaning? Who maintains a memorial when its meaning is less relevant to the next generations? In some cases, the memorial may no longer be politically or socially relevant, such as the victory memorials created by the Government in the aftermath of the war. Memorials often fall into disrepair and are sometimes removed in such cases. If people no longer subscribe to the values that created them, what should be done with them? Should they be 'erased' (such as the destruction of LTTE memorials by the Government) or should they be reprogrammed? Reprogramming the meaning of a memorial takes effort and time. However, the conversation about its relevance and legitimacy, and need to re-think the circumstances of it, in itself is useful for a society; particularly one that is in transition moving from direct violence to security and peace. This in turn relates to the sequencing and timing of memorials in the process of a transitional justice framework. Quite tellingly, the fact that developing a memorial is a 'process' that involves many actors (including the State, civil society, the public, artists, urban planners, donors and the media) and should not be taken lightly, was one of the few conclusive lessons that emerged from the public consultations on memorials.

5.1. Recommendations for Government:

- Should unequivocally and officially acknowledge the tremendous losses and vulnerabilities of all the conflict affected communities

- Should initiate more formal and broader public consultations about the need, nature and purposes of memorials prior to engaging in any transitional justice mechanisms that include memorials, memorialisation and reconciliation activities.
- Should not pursue national level memorials of triumphalist narratives of war or the glorification of violence, but enable memorials to incidents, both 'difficult' and relating to 'goodness', that can help towards conversations about truth, justice and peace
- Should enable community-led memorials, that represent multiple narratives, through easier access to local government permissions and funding (if possible) for such needs
- Should address lagging issues of war and reminders of violence that need resolution before memorialisation is to begin: impunity, physical and economic insecurity, the issue of enforced disappearances and demilitarisation are topmost needs
- Should systematically address socio-economic and ethno-political impacts of the war as well as systemic issues related to the root causes of conflict such language reform
- Should be sensitive to emerging conflicts, especially related to religious violence and intolerance while supporting and promoting unity in diversity
- Should enable the rehabilitation and re-development of existing and damaged memorials, in consultation with local communities in the respective areas, including preserving and protecting all archaeological heritage
- Should seriously review, re-evaluate and reform the education system with a view towards reconciliation which includes defining terms, addressing systematic and negative ethnic representations and enabling the understanding the causes of past conflicts

5.2. Recommendations for practitioners and civil society projects:

- Should not impose community memorialisation unless it is community-led, owned or accepted as necessary
- Should engage in wider and deeper public consultations on memorialisation if attempting to develop a project or memorial
- Should be sensitive to diverse needs and insecurities and be careful when considering 'shared or common' histories as these can easily lose local specificity in favour of the common denominator when aggregating narratives
- Should consider memorialisation a long-term process rather than a short-term project
- Should work with homogenous community groups first in identifying key needs and challenges of memorialisation, and how to allow for a pluralism of views prior to attempting cross-ethnic dialogue through memorialisation
- Should maintain flexibility and openness to people's views and change project outputs accordingly

5.3. Recommendations for donors:

- Should be flexible with regard to programming, sequencing and timing, and support to longer-term engagement on memorialisation
- Should be aware and cautious about 'one-size-fits-all' programming, which attempts to implement projects that have worked in other transitional justice conditions in Sri Lanka. It is better to let local ideas and outcomes develop out of global examples and best practices
- Should engage with stakeholders to create a deeper understanding on what memorialisation means at various levels and to various ethno-political groups

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End Notes

i The Herstories Project is implemented by the author together with Viluthu Centre for Human Resource Development and the Community Memorialisation Project with the memorymap.lk archive is jointly implemented with Search for Common Ground, Sri Lanka

ii It is important to note that in the immediate aftermath of the war, Martyr's Day was increasingly and defiantly celebrated by the people, even in the absence of the LTTE leading or calling for it. This indicates people's need for memorialisation and grieving, which was restricted after the war. https://groundviews.org/2017/05/19/victory-over-remembrance-a-day-showcasing-division/

iii An example from the archive - http://memorymap.lk/index.php/display/singleMemoryView/143

iv http://www.bbc.com/sinhala/news/story/2011/03/110307_jaffna_cemetery.shtml

v Hettiarachchi, R. Memorialisation as public history: A practitioner's Note. Unbound Journal. Issue 2. 2018. http://www.unboundjournal.in/memorialisation-as-public-history-a-practitioners-note/

vi It must be noted that in many contexts, memorialisation and memorials happen throughout the conflict life-cycle. It takes on different characteristics depending on the nature, culture, stage and duration of the conflict. Barsalou, J. and Victoria Baxter. The urge to remember: the role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional justice. In Stabilization and Reconstruction Series No.5., January 2007.

vii http://www.infolanka.com/news/IL/1641.htm

viii http://www.sundaytimes.lk/120205/BusinessTimes/bt38.html

ix http://amazinglanka.com/wp/monument-of-aranthalawa-massacre/

x http://memorymap.lk/index.php/display/view_photoEssay/11

xi Hettiarachchi, R. Memorialisation as public history: A practitioner's Note. Unbound Journal. Issue 2. 2018. http://www.unboundjournal.in/memorialisation-as-public-history-a-practitioners-note/

xii A further note on Maaveerar Naal – although the memorialisation has been restricted after 2015, 2017 has proven to be different with larger numbers of Tamils in the north coming out with posters as well as expressions of public grief even referring to their dead, as heroes, which was unthinkable in such public expression post war. The impact of such expression is yet to be seen - http://newsin.asia/lankan-tamils-come-shell-observe-lttes-heroes-day/

xiii http://www.onur.gov.lk/images/download/NationalPolicy-English.pdf

xiv The consultations happened from September 2016 to January 2017

xv Kandy (covering Kandy, Nuwara Eliya, Hatton, Badulla and Moneragala); Batticaloa (covering Kattankudy,Vaalaicchenai, Oddamaavadi and Mangalagama) and Ampara (covering Gonagolla, Kalmunai, Uhana, Ampara, Batticaloa, Akkaraipattu Sammanturai, Pottuvil, Thirukkovil); Matara (covering Galle, , Nilwella, Godapitiya, Wilpita, Hambantota, Matara); Jaffna (covering Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Killinochchi, Vavuniya); and Anuradhapura (Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura)

xvi This report is based on the acceptance that "'reconciliation' is a multilevel process that involves national-level responsibility but also requires coordination and holistic approaches to promote social reconstruction at many levels of society. Various processes—legal, social, political, and economic— need to be at work if reconciliation is to be achieved". Barsalou, J. and Victoria Baxter. The urge to remember: the role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional justice. In Stabilization and Reconstruction Series No.5., January 2007.https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/srs5.pdf

xvii All quotations, opinions and findings are cited here from the 5 consultations reports produced by rapporteurs, notes of the author, and by listening to the audio recordings of the meetings

xviii https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/kilinochchi-water-tower

xix Such assertions are common in survivors and victims in many other global conflicts, where many other things are deemed more important in the hierarchy of needs in the aftermath of war. Sequencing and timing therefore becomes a key consideration as explored by Barsalou and Baxter in The urge to remember: the role of memorials in social reconstruction and transitional

justice. In Stabilization and Reconstruction Series No.5., January 2007.https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/srs5.pdf

xx The issue of repurposing a memorial or reframing its narrative once the 'in group' of people who remember why it was created in the first place no longer exists is an interesting problem that emerges from the issue of maintenance and safe-guarding a memorial. Similarly, the physicality of a memorial, its representations of loss and absence, remains in the public imagination and collective memory of those who remember it, for as long as those who remember its purpose are alive to pass it on, even if a physical memorial no longer exists. Malathi De Alwis' discussion of the Embilipitiya Students' memorial and the Neelan Thiruchlevam memorial with regard to the life-cycle of a memorial in 'Problematising memorials: the life and death of a memorial. November, 2016' is an interesting illustration of this issue. However, this was never discussed in the consultations.

xxi Non-physical memorials are rituals or practices (religious or non-religious) that in their repetition over a period of time, become ingrained in the public's imagination as a 'memorial' to an incident, group, outcome, grievance or belief. It is the collective practice of such a ritualistic action that makes it a 'public' memorial by creating in that moment an imagined community of believers or an 'in-group', whereas private remembrances are often non-physical memorials.

xxii The physicality of a memorial, allows for its representations of loss and absence to become part of the community's lived experience because it is 'there'. In a sense, it is the evidence of the present that the past happened. This is similar to what Malathi De Alwis talks about in her exploration of Derrida's articulation of 'trace' as quoted in "Disappearance and Displacement in Sri Lanka', Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol.22. No 3. Oxford University Press, 2009.

xxiii The participants did not discuss theproblems inherent in the discussion of 'culture' or 'heritage' in such a simplistic and unitary manner. It is important to note that in post-war countries where a clear majority exists, as an ethnic group and as a victor in war, a dominant culture or heritage might supersede all others. Governments should be cautious, especially with regard to 'using culture' as a policy in memorialisation, because 'heritage' and 'culture' could allude to (and prioritise) dominant narratives. The plurality of cultures and many sources of heritage many get lost in such entrenched ethno-political contexts. This could be worsened in contexts, that have little capacity for resilience against populist politics.

xxiv In sociology and social psychology, an in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an out-group is a social group with which an individual does not identify. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201012/in-groups-out-groups-and-the-psychology-crowds

xxv Hasalaka Gamini was a private in the Sri Lankan Army, who sacrificed his life to heroically save an entire army base from an LTTE attack during the war in the 80's. A memorial for his bravery has been set up in elephant pass where the incident took place.

xxvi As of December 31, 2017, the Army had released a total of 55,643.58 acres of land in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Mannar and Vavuniya Districts. http://www.army.lk/news/another-land-area-13334-acres-released-civil-land-owners

xxvii This is significant as many in the North believe that the word reconciliation is a 'loaded term', which erases root causes of the conflict that lead to war, such as the specific needs and systematic discrimination felt by minorities. Many believe that the term includes an implicit meaning where the Tamil communities must give up on some of their needs, rights and demands in order to 'co-exist' and be reconciled with the 'South' [State rather than people], which would essentially mean that the structures of inequality remain unchanged.

xxviii Most of the issues that have been discussed are in relation to the purpose of community or national memorials rather than private or family remembrances and rituals.

xxix Who determines fairness is a problematic issue in framing such descriptions.

xxx The problematic nature of 'projectisation' of memory is not discussed here, but is an ethical consideration in the field of memorialisation

Annex

Examples of memorialisation possibilities suggested by the participants at the regional workshops

National or district level, those that died or an incident worth remembering or a site of memory where something of significance happened could be memorialised through:	**Community Level, the dead or an incident worth remembering or a site of memory where something of significance happened could be memorialised through**
Physical memorials in Colombo or major city centres	community level physical memorials
Sports festivals	Creating simple mobiel memorial libraries
Bringing various ethnicities together through mass festivals or public meetings to remember loss of life or to celebrate commonalities	Street theatre showcasing an incident worth remembering
Exhibitions (permeant, temporary or traveling) to teach future generations about the negative impacts of war	Blood-donation camps, medical camps organised on anniversaries
Naming villages or creating entirely new villages to honour those who died when resettling people	Bus stands that are regularly used
Development as compensation for those affected by war - building houses, public works and construction projects but with memorials, names of those affected, or descriptions of the incidents that they are memorialising	Public works such as culverts, small dams, community centres as permanent structures with descriptions of incident or names of those to whom it is dedicated
Dedicating a 'national day' of mourning for all dead, or for all those affected by a particular impact of war (such as disability)	Bodhi Puja, religious lectures, acts of merit (pin) on anniversaries
Books and albums that showcase the impact of conflict to be distributed to schools	Creating community organisations for 'good work' (subha-sadana) in memory of the dead or suffering
Issuing stamps to commemorate incidents or people	Building simple structures to remember or supporting clergy's needs in places of religious worship (buduge, toilets, painting the building on anniversaries)
Preserving documents and details of significance for future generations at archives and museums	Shramadana or community clean-up operations that involve the entire community
Supporting mothers, wives and daughters of war-heroes and ex-combatants and war-affected women (some consultations said all, some said war-heroes and some highlighted ex-combatants) with skill development, self-employment schemes	Dedicating a street name to a person of significance or to remember various categories of people affected by the war (such as the missing, or the mothers of war heroes)
Scholarships to children affected by the war specifically to memorialise of individuals	Giving of meals to the poor or Alms-giving (Dansal) on anniversaries
Mass-organised multi-religious activities and meditation to remember the war	Sports events, art competitions or singing competitions in honour of specific people or incidents
Building clock-towers at junctions, public libraries and schools as memorials	Story-telling events at schools

About the author –

Radhika Hettiarachchi is a researcher, curator and development practitioner. She is primarily engaged in the field of peacebuilding with an expertise in memorialisation and oral history, as well as the arts as a means of creating space for civil society discourse on issues of gender, security, memory justice and reconciliation. She read English and Communications Theory at York University, Canada, and holds a Masters in Development Management from the London School of Economics and Political Science, U.K.

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About the project –

The Community Memorialisation Project is a joint project of Search for Common Ground and The Herstories Project along with district partners - Viluthu Centre for Human Resource Development in Mannar, Prathiba Media Network in Matara and Women Development Foundation in Ampara.

The project will capture individual and shared community narratives in order to prioritise and strengthen community owned memorialisation. Its primary objective is to facilitate an environment that acknowledges and preserves multiple histories, while encouraging empathy through inter-generational transfer and inter-regional sharing of memory to support peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Building on individual stories the project team will work with the communities to share their stories and facilitate dialogue within their communities about why memorialisation is needed, why multiple narratives should co-exist, and how we remember, at the divisional level and between the participating districts. The process will focus on empathetic listening and acknowledgement.

While the project will have a cathartic and empathetic impact on the participants sharing their life stories at an individual level, it will also facilitate their voices and needs to be heard, through its wide dissemination. The success of the project will be in attitudinal changes – about the need to hear and acknowledge the many personal truths that exist. At a wider level, it will contribute to how Sri Lankans memorialise and historicise our past, and to making processes of justice, truth and reconciliation inclusive.