

Complex conceptions of Truth in the former Yugoslavia

An examination of the Initiative for RECOM's truth-seeking
discourse

Radboud University



Lisan Berk | s4836138

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Supervisor: Dr. Bert Bomert

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Abstract

According to Andrieu (2010, p. 541), “the search for justice and a common ‘truth’ is often problematic and can have divisive consequences”. This view seems to be especially relevant in the context of the former Yugoslavia, characterized by memory competition and fragmentation along ethno-national lines (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010). In the wake of the ICTY’s proceedings, a number of scholars conclude that its verdicts have only deepened divisions, by contributing to competing ‘truths’ concerning denial and representations of aggression and victimhood (Zupan, 2006; Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010; Moll, 2013; Selimovic, 2015; Milanović, 2016). Almost two decades since the last combatants laid down their arms, the Coalition for RECOM aims to establish a regional truth commission and thereby address the ‘truth’ about the past in this complex and conflictive memory landscape.

This study examines the Initiative for RECOM’s conceptualization of ‘truth’ about the past, as reproduced and disseminated in its monthly publication titled ‘The Voice’. This examination is conducted by means of an integrated analytic framework, primarily based on Fairclough’s approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (2001a), ideas about political discourse analysis by Moon (2006), and an interpretive approach to content analysis by Hardy et al. (2004). This mixed methods approach is used to examine the represented subject positions and signifying elements present in the research units, reproduced in their discursive context. Based on the conceptual framework, incorporating literature on truth commission discourses, the selective process of ‘truth’ construction, and the corresponding implications, relevant signifying elements are identified as representations regarding the level of inquiry, and the practices and objectives shaping four distinct ‘truth’ discourses.

The results indicate that the discourse reproduces a diversity of subject positions, primarily representing the perspectives of civil society actors, politicians, journalists and scholars. Combined, these perspectives reproduce a dominant discursive pattern, focused on establishing ‘undeniable facts’, inspiring public dialogue, and contributing to an imagined future characterized by reconciliation. The discourse reveals three distinct but related conceptions of ‘truth’, representing ‘truth’ as the contested terrain of competing interpretations of the past, as the factual and victim-centric objective of RECOM, and as the shared outcome of an essentially social process. The Initiative’s discursive context and reproduced assumptions thus contribute to the representation of RECOM as a facilitatory actor, establishing facts that are intended to lead to meaningful interpretation and the construction of a shared ‘truth’ in the public arena. This study therefore concludes that RECOM has compromised its initial objectives regarding a more profound macro-truth, in favor of a narrow and partly exclusionary ‘truth’ that is envisioned to bridge social divides and contribute to an imagined future.

Table of content

Abstract	1
Table of content	2
List of figures	4
1 Introduction	5
1.1 Research design.....	6
1.2 Relevance	6
1.2.1 <i>Scientific relevance</i>	6
1.2.2 <i>Societal relevance</i>	7
2 Literature review	8
Section 1: Discourses, narratives and memory competition	8
2.1 The concept of discourse.....	8
2.2 ‘Collective memory’ as a narrative on the past.....	9
Section 2: The work of truth commissions.....	10
2.4 The evolution of transitional justice: from retribution to restoration	11
2.5 Justice, Truth and Reconciliation.....	12
2.6 A truth commission’s investigation: level of inquiry	13
2.6.1 <i>Objects of investigation & their implications</i>	13
2.6.2 <i>Methodology and results: Micro- versus macro-truth</i>	14
2.7 A truth commission’s evolving discourses	16
2.7.1 <i>Forensic discourse</i>	16
2.7.2 <i>Narrative discourse</i>	17
2.7.3 <i>Social discourse</i>	19
2.7.4 <i>Restorative discourse</i>	21
2.11 Concluding remarks.....	23
3 Methodology	25
3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis	25
3.1.1 <i>Defining CDA</i>	25
3.1.2 <i>Justification of methodology</i>	26
3.1.3 <i>The analytical framework and methods</i>	27
3.2 The research units	31
3.2.1 <i>The Coalition for RECOM and its discursive context</i>	31
3.2.2 <i>The Voice</i>	34
3.3 Operationalization.....	36

3.3.1 Sub-questions	36
3.3.2 Code scheme.....	37
4 Results	49
4.1 The subject positions.....	49
4.1.1 The authors.....	49
4.1.2 Quoted actors.....	52
4.1.3 Answering the sub-question	54
4.2 The level of inquiry	55
4.2.1 A brief overview	57
4.2.2 Individual crimes or cases.....	58
4.2.3 Specific events	62
4.2.4 Trends and Patterns	64
4.2.5 Answering the sub-question	66
4.3 Truth discourses	67
4.3.1 Overview.....	68
4.3.2 Forensic discourse.....	69
4.3.3 Narrative discourse.....	73
4.3.4 Social discourse.....	76
4.3.5 Restorative discourse.....	79
4.3.6 Answering the sub-question	83
5 Conclusion	85
5.1 Answering the main research question.....	85
5.2 Reflection.....	86
6 References	88
6.1 Academic references	88
6.2 Other references	93

List of figures

4.1: 'Percentage of 'author' codes per category (%)'

4.2: 'Amount of articles (%) and amount of coded elements (%), per dominant category of quoted actors'

4.3: 'RECOM's objectives and functions pertaining to macro- and micro-truth'

4.4: 'Micro- versus macro-truth: percentage of elements (%) present in the research units, per category'

4.5: 'Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of 'Individual crimes or cases''

4.6: 'Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of 'Specific events''

4.7: 'Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of 'Statistics''

4.8: 'Division of elements belonging to the sub-category 'Statistics about victims''

4.9: 'Division of coded elements, per Truth discourse category'

4.10: 'Percentage of research units in which elements are present, per discourse category'

1 Introduction

On November 22nd 2017, Ratko Mladic, was convicted of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (New York Times, 2017). Among other charges, Mladic was found guilty of multiple counts of “ethnic cleansing”, including the Srebrenica genocide, committed during his time as a commander in the Bosnian Serb forces from 1992 until 1996 (Guardian, 2017a). Over two decades after the end of the Bosnian War, Mladic’s sentencing to life imprisonment was met by divided responses. According to the New York Times (2017), “[m]any in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, watching a live broadcast of the trial cheered when the verdict was announced”. The conviction of Mladic, nicknamed ‘the Butcher of Bosnia’, is described as a victory for justice and seems to have strengthened the sense of victimhood among Bosnian Muslims (New York Times, 2017). Alternatively, responses by Serb nationals were of a different nature altogether. The president of Bosnia’s Republika Srpska stated that “[r]egardless of the verdict that we all feel as part of the campaign against Serbs, Ratko Mladic remains a legend of the Serb nation” (New York Times, 2017). Gauging responses in the Serbian village of Lazarevo, the Daily News (2017) reports that residents perceive the conviction to be biased and unjust. In protest to the verdict, they honored Mladic as a national hero by renaming their village ‘Mladicevo’ (Daily News, 2017).

These fundamentally opposite responses can be seen as a reflection of more general competing narratives regarding the conflicts and their aftermath in the former Yugoslavia. Especially in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moll (2013) argues that different nationalist versions of ‘truth’ compete for control of the country’s memory landscape, contributing to increasing fragmentation of Bosnian society along ethno-national lines. Across the region, the New York Times (2017) similarly observes “a return to the nationalist politics of the 1990s”. According to a number of scholars, the verdicts of the ICTY are continuously manipulated by political elites, strengthening nationalist narratives and contributing to divisions as opposed to inspiring reconciliation (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010; Moll, 2013; Selimovic, 2015). In reflecting on the current situation in the region, the Guardian (2017b) states that “[b]orders are being questioned, ethnic tensions are bubbling up, and land swaps are being mooted as a last resort to prevent a slide back towards violence”.

Within this tense and possibly volatile context, the Coalition for RECOM is fighting for a chance to deal with the past by means of truth-seeking. The Coalition was born from civil society in 2008, and has been advocating ever since for the establishment of RECOM, or “the Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2001” (Coalition for RECOM, 2017a). According to Orlandi (2014, p. 110), the Initiative’s objectives are “aimed at preventing historical revisionism and helping victims as well as civil society at large to resist political manipulation of the past”. Once established as an official truth commission, she argues that RECOM is well-equipped for success, representing the possibility to construct a “common and non-contradictory narrative of the past” and ultimately contribute to reconciliation (Orlandi, 2014, p. 112). According to a number of scholars, however, the assumed positive relationship between truth and reconciliation is questionable (Borneman, 2002; Leebaw, 2008; Andrieu, 2010; McGratten & Hopkins, 2017). Chapman and Ball (2001) argue that this is in part due to the selective process of constructing ‘truth’, often resulting in exclusions that lead to contestation.

1.1 Research design

In light of the salience of competing narratives on the past in the former Yugoslavia, the Initiative for RECOM provides an interesting case for examining 'truth' construction in a context where the past is an especially sensitive topic. This study aims to understanding this discursive process and the underlying assumptions, contributing to a specific and possibly exclusionary conceptualization of 'truth'. This leads to the following main question:

'What conception of 'truth' is constructed by the Initiative for RECOM, concerning the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 until 2001 and their aftermath, and what are its implications?'

This question will be answered by examining the Initiative for RECOM's material images regarding 'truth', by means of an integrated framework combining critical discourse analysis and content analysis. This study focusses on analyzing the people who construct or contribute to the discourse, the representations regarding investigation of the past, and the reproduced objectives and practices that shape dominant truth commission discourses. The analysis is therefore guided by the following sub-questions:

1. What subject positions are represented by the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?
2. What level of inquiry regarding truth-seeking is addressed by the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?
3. To what extent do different 'truth' discourses shape the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?

1.2 Relevance

1.2.1 Scientific relevance

In researching narratives on the past in post-conflict settings, an extensive body of academic literature has been developed concerning their often competing and divisive nature. Scholars have focused on processes of memory construction and identity (Gillis, 1994; McGratten & Hopkins, 2017), memory politics and the 'collective memory' (Bell, 2003; Moll, 2013) and memory competition (Pääbo, 2008; Moll, 2013). The content of these competing narratives has also received great academic interest, resulting in theories on dominant representations (USIP, 2005; Bar-On, 2010; Moll, 2013) and case studies (Ramet, 2007; Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010). While theorizing ways to reconcile these competing narratives and divided societies, many refer to the role of transitional justice. This has resulted in a vast body of scholarly work on the intended function and consequences of different transitional justice mechanisms (Clark, 2008; Leebaw, 2008; Andrieu, 2010), including retribution and its institutions (Orentlicher, 1991; Dougherty, 2004; Arbour, 2007; Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010) and the mechanisms of restorative justice (Millar, 2011; Aiken, 2016). Restorative justice in the form of truth commissions is argued to be most effective in countering divisive narratives and inspiring reconciliation (Clark, 2008), making it a popular intervention among peace-building practitioners (Leebaw, 2008). This assumption has inspired the development of academic literature on truth commissions, researching for instance their effect on individual psychological healing (Young, 2004; Laplante & Theidon, 2007), and their general relation to reconciliation and social healing (Mamdani, 1996; Gibson, 2006; Aiken, 2016).

Considering this vast body of academic literature on restorative justice and its theorized purpose of countering divisive narratives, it is remarkable that the narratives and modes of truth production deployed by truth commissions have so far largely remained outside the scope of academic interest and analysis (Wilson, 2001). Furthermore, Brahm (2007, p. 17) argues that the existing literature on truth commissions is based on a small number of cases, most prominently the South African TRC, raising the issue of whether these results are valid in other contexts. Hayner (2011, p. 237) therefore argues that more attention must be paid to the great number of diverse truth commissions that have been established in the past, focusing on closer case studies. More specifically, Milton (2007, p. 4) argues that truth commissions “*present a fascinating opportunity for historians to look into the past and see how that past is constructed through truth commission narratives*”. A focus on narratives is also advocated by French (2009, p. 94), who argues in favor of a discourse-centered approach to analyzing truth commission publications, in order to understand how past violence and experience is represented. Along similar lines, Kostovicova (2017, p. 173) argues that a focus on textual analysis, and especially mixed methodology, is underrepresented in transitional justice scholarship, and is therefore “key to pushing the frontiers of knowledge in the TJ field”.

It can therefore be argued that researching the Initiative for RECOM’s process of ‘truth’ construction is not only relevant because it will add to the so far limited sample of studied truth commission cases, but also because it provides insight in the under-researched topic of truth commissions as narrative-builders, by means of deploying mixed methods focused on textual analysis.

1.2.2 Societal relevance

In light of continued societal fragmentation and dissatisfaction concerning retributive justice mechanisms in the former Yugoslavia, the work of RECOM could provide a valuable and alternative road to reconciliation. According to Orlandi (2014), however, earlier attempts at establishing truth commissions and providing restorative justice have failed to deliver results. She argues that due to persistent political and societal fragmentation along ethno-national lines, initiatives have so far mainly sprung from specific ethno-national groups and have spread largely one-sided narratives. Due to a lack of support and cooperation from other ethno-national groups and states, a number of initiatives were therefore terminated shortly after their conception (Orlandi, 2014). It can therefore be argued that the success of RECOM is in part dependent on the nature and perspective of the narrative it aims to construct and spread among the populations of the former Yugoslavia.

The need for a unifying and accepted counter-narrative is especially great in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to Moll (2013), this country finds itself in the unique situation of dealing with, not one, but three official narratives on the past. The three constituent peoples, backed by their constitutional legitimacy, compete for domination over BiH’s shared memory landscape (Moll, 2013). Pääbo (2008) argues that this memory competition, although classified as a psychological war, can be escalated and trigger violent outbursts depending on the behavior of the memory entrepreneurs. It can therefore be argued that the creation of a shared narrative accepted by all three constituent peoples, is necessary to prevent possible political instability and escalation in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s contemporary society. Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, tensions are not restricted to BiH, but are on the rise in the entire Western Balkan region. This thesis will therefore analyze how RECOM aims to construct a shared narrative, what this narrative entails, and what its implications are. Insight into this constructed narrative can provide an indication of RECOM’s possible success or failure, in terms of spreading an accepted shared narrative, and will also be relevant to other civil society organizations working in the field of documentation and narrative construction.

2 Literature review

In countries emerging from violent conflict, narratives concerning war memories take center stage in the public sphere (Johnson, 2012). They are intertwined with identity construction and are purposefully mobilized in the political arena (Moll, 2013). They inform the investigation of human rights crimes and are framed to legitimize objectives of justice and reconciliation. These emergent discourses govern the production and reproduction of representations and practices, and thereby actively shape public life in transitional societies. In order to understand these discourses and their implications in the case of the former Yugoslavia and the Initiative for RECOM, this literature review discusses a range of relevant theories and empirical studies. In section 2.1, the concept of discourse is discussed, followed by a closer examination of narratives on the past. Section 2.2 is devoted to truth commissions, discussing their role in reproducing specific representations and practices and their implications.

Section 1: Discourses, narratives and memory competition

2.1 The concept of discourse

“[S]peech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but [...] it is the very object of man’s conflicts.” (Foucault, 1971, p. 9)

This quote from Foucault’s famous inaugural lecture, ‘Orders of discourse’ (1971), perfectly stages the point of departure for this literature review. It summarizes the view that speech, or the material manifestation of discourse, is not simply a medium through which human interaction is expressed, but in fact shapes the nature of this interaction. In other words, Foucault (1971) argues that discourse is power. It has the power to determine what is allowed, what is reason, and what is ‘truth’ and therefore also has the power to prohibit and exclude by means of the “rules of exclusion” (Foucault, 1971, pp. 8-10). It is this exclusionary capacity that leads to the notion that discourse is the object of conflict, between those who have the power to shape the discourse and those who contest its exclusions. Furthermore, Foucault (1971, p. 11) argues that the most powerful or effective discourses base their legitimization on our conceptions of knowledge, including the scientific and natural, and are distributed by and therefore reliant upon institutions and practices.

According to Fairclough (2003, p. 2) most academic work on discourses is inspired by Foucault’s insights. This influence is for instance apparent in the work of Doel (2016, p. 224), who argues that: “discourse is a specific constellation of knowledge and practice through which a way of life is given material expression”. It represents a set of observable representations and practices, which reflect the imagined and framed worldviews of a specific social group (Doel, 2016, p. 224). According to Doel (2016, p. 224), this means that a discourse is inherently partial and selective, “making some things visible and other things invisible, some things audible and other things inaudible, some things thinkable and other things unthinkable, some things significant and other things insignificant, some things worthy and other things worthless”. Furthermore, since discourses, or materially expressed world views, are always partial and selective, they also encounter and inspire contestation (Doel, 2016). In relation to this contestation, Fairclough (2001a, p. 124) refers to the concepts of social order and the corresponding order of discourse. These concepts reflect the notion that our social world is ordered, meaning that some ways of being, thinking and expressing dominate over other alternative ways. A dominant social order therefore determines which practices and representations are mainstream and also assigns oppositional or alternative practices and representations to the margins (Fairclough,

2001a, p. 124). Doel (2016, p. 224) therefore notes that discursive practices result in a “social and spatial power struggle between ‘dominant discourses’ on the one hand, and ‘discourses of resistance’ (or ‘dominated discourses’) on the other hand”. These views reflect the work of Foucault (1971), insofar as they recognize the power of discourse, its dominating influence on social life and its inherent exclusionary capacity that often results in contestation or conflict.

These insights provide the framework for this literature review on truth commissions and narratives on the violent past. These narratives, which can be described as the representations governed by a discourse, both include and exclude, are the objects of contestation, and must be examined within their institutional context. This review therefore discusses the practices and power relations that contribute to the construction of these representations, the purpose and content of the constructed narratives, and the implications that flow from these discourses.

2.2 ‘Collective memory’ as a narrative on the past

According to Gillis (1994, p. 3), “[m]emories help us make sense of the world we live in”. They are subjected to a process of continuous revising, in which our changing and complex identities inform what is remembered and what is not (Gillis, 1994). Like identity, memory is therefore a social construct that can be mobilized to shape the so-called ‘collective memory’ and identity of a group or nation, which helps people in transitional societies to make sense of the conflict they lived through (Moll, 2013; McGrattan & Hopkins, 2017). McGratten and Hopkins (2017, p. 488) argue that memory informs “processes of binding, bonding and ‘othering’” within groups, which all inspire a sense of belonging to that group. Relating such processes to political purpose and identity, Moll (2013, p. 911) speaks of ‘memory politics’.

“Memory politics can be defined as a field of action where different memory entrepreneurs – political and social stakeholders such as governmental structures, political parties, interest groups and intellectuals – use public discourses and practices, such as the erection of monuments, to construct collective narratives on the past in order to support the legitimization of political action, the cementation of group cohesion and the development of a collective identity.” (Moll, 2013, p. 911)

In short, memory politics involves the construction of narratives on the past, which are deployed to validate the group or nation’s contemporary political action and identity and result in the creation of a collective memory. Bell (2003), however, warns against the use of the term ‘collective memory’ or ‘memory’ in general, when referring to this process. Due to the highly politicized and selective nature of the process, the concept of memory is too organic and bottom-up to describe its end product. Instead, he argues in favor of using the term ‘myth’, to describe the constructed narrative “that simplifies, dramatizes and selectively narrates the story of a nation’s past and its place in the world” (Bell, 2003, p. 75). Whatever term is used, however, it is most important to remember that a collective memory narrative is not an objective recollection of the past, but rather a framed representation of events which cannot be understood outside its context of politics and identity (Bell, 2003; Moll, 2013; McGrattan & Hopkins, 2017). The construction of a collective memory or myth in post-conflict societies can therefore be seen as a discourse, selectively shaping a social group’s identity and place in the world by means of practices that solidify this position.

According to Andrews (2003, p. 48), the use of the term ‘collective’ might evoke the impression of a consensus on the past, but this impression is misleading. She argues that, in reality, “[m]emory, both individual and collective, is a contested terrain; claims about the past are very often met with

counter-claims” (Andrews, 2003, p. 48). As argued by McGratten and Hopkins (2017), a collective memory is selective by nature and therefore not only inspires group cohesion but also results in exclusion of ‘Others’. According to Bar-On (2010, p. 199), this process of exclusionary group demarcation is widespread in the aftermath of collective loss, resulting in multiple ‘collective paradigmatic narratives’, “which are created by a group to support the logic and morality of their own side against the other”. This constructed collective memory can foster feelings of “animosity, fear, hatred, and distrust between groups” (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 852). Dominant narratives therefore often inform processes of political mobilization and memory competition, resulting in a ‘War of Memories’ (Moll, 2013).

With propaganda as its main weapon, a ‘War of Memories’ can be classified as a psychological war, aimed at “winning the hearts and minds of people” (Pääbo, 2008, p. 6). According to Pääbo (2008, p. 7), a War of Memories occurs when “different nations have contradicting memories of the common past”. He continues to argue that, although the war is psychological in nature, it can be escalated and trigger violent outbursts depending on the behavior of the memory entrepreneurs (Pääbo, 2008). Especially in countries where control over the official narrative does not belong to one group, competing narratives can lead to political instability and social tensions (Pääbo, 2008 & Moll, 2013). Similarly, the United States Institute of Peace (2005, p. 4) argues that the telling of historical narratives can be the cause of continued conflict:

“Specific traumatic events, so-called chosen traumas, may become transformed or glorified in the retelling to subsequent generations and may be used to incite revenge and justify efforts to restore the honor or dignity of the victimized group.”

This is found to be especially true in cases of violence aimed at specific ethnic or social groups, where the sense of victimization is strongly linked to group identity (USIP, 2005). According to McGratten and Hopkins (2017), this link between a sense of victimhood and continued conflict can be found in the level of acknowledgement. For without acknowledgement of sustained losses, they argue, perceptions of injustice prevail and drive the need to rectify past wrongs (McGratten & Hopkins, 2017, p. 489). In short, the construction and reproduction of competing narratives on the past can trigger the violent escalation of a War of Memories (USIP, 2005; Pääbo, 2008) and prevent reconciliation within post-conflict society (Borneman, 2002). In relating these notions to theory on the social struggle between discourses, it can indeed be argued that discourse “is the very object of man’s conflicts” (Foucault, 1971, p. 9).

Section 2: The work of truth commissions

Within contemporary discourses on transitional justice, the plight of divided post-conflict societies in terms of competing narratives and social fragmentation is theorized to be overcome by restorative justice (Clark, 2008). As mechanisms of restorative justice, truth commissions investigate the ‘truth’ about the violent past and construct an ‘inclusive narrative’, which is understood to counter the divisive consequences and dangers associated with memory competition (Andrews, 2003). By fostering dialogue, promoting healing and opposing denial, truth commissions supposedly pave the path to reconciliation (Leebaw, 2008, p. 95). These assumptions are therefore based on the belief that a positive relationship exists between justice, truth and reconciliation. In order to assess the implications of the discourses produced and reproduced by truth commissions, a deeper understanding of this relationship is vital. This section therefore briefly discusses how assumptions regarding the positive nature of this relationship came to dominate discourses on transitional justice, followed by an examination of these assumptions. The main portion of this section, however, examines the diversity

of practices and representations that flow from these assumptions, as deployed by truth commissions, and their implications in post-conflict settings.

2.4 The evolution of transitional justice: from retribution to restoration

Although transitional justice is not a new phenomenon, the origin of its contemporary debate can be traced back to the so-called “third wave” of democratization in Eastern European and Latin American countries during the 1980s and early 1990s (Leebaw, 2008). According to Orentlicher (1991), these transitions from dictatorships to elected governments brought forth an urgent issue, regarding the establishment of the rule of law. In an often politically unstable environment, the will to prosecute atrocious crimes committed by a previous regime had to be weighed against the survival of the new-born democracies and the possible dangers of military force (Orentlicher, 1991). In line with this zeitgeist, Orentlicher (1991) addresses the demands of justice and the development of states’ obligations under international law, arguing that justice and the authority of law itself require retribution, meaning the prosecution of atrocious crimes. According to Arbour (2007, p. 2), early conceptions of transitional justice were thus constructed on the “erstwhile revolutionary proposition of individual criminal responsibility for international crimes”. In the interest of survival, however, several Latin American successor regimes chose to ‘pardon’ rather than ‘punish’ (Orentlicher, 1991; Leebaw, 2008). In this era of evolving international legal standards and increasing human rights advocacy, these developments led to the conceptualization of reconciliation as compromising with the previous regime (Leebaw, 2008). According to Leebaw (2008), the early days of transitional justice development were therefore characterized by a political orientation and a focus on retribution, while dilemmas concerning transitional justice were predominantly framed as tensions between retributive justice and reconciliation.

Although discourses concerning transitional justice were thus constructed on the principles of criminal justice, Arbour (2007) argues that it soon became clear that the many issues facing a post-conflict transitional society could not be addressed through retribution (alone). The “expansion of a regime against impunity” (Dougherty, 2004, p. 311) had culminated in the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and its counterpart for Rwanda, in 1993 and 1994 respectively (Leebaw, 2008). As scholars focused their attention on the workings and outcomes of the ad hoc tribunals, however, these institutions and the assumptions they were based on proved to be problematic. The tribunals established neither full independence nor legitimacy, since they depended on the states’ cooperation for a range of activities and were continuously challenged by the populations of the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Leebaw, 2008). Such contentions concerning the ad hoc tribunals, combined with a growing dissatisfaction among the international community due to their perceived unsustainable size and inefficiency, stimulated the quest for alternative approaches (Dougherty, 2004).

In contexts where the perpetration of crimes was often denied and perpetrators still held power, South Africa and a number of Latin American states developed such alternative mechanisms for dealing with the violent past (Leebaw, 2008; Millar, 2011). Demanded by victims as a form of justice, ‘truth seeking’ quickly became an acknowledged alternative to retribution. Although truth commissions were still regarded as second rate mechanisms by many human rights advocates in these early days of transitional justice development (Leebaw, 2008), especially the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission nevertheless proved to be very successful in many ways (Gibson, 2006). Due to this combination of demands for truth seeking and dissatisfaction concerning criminal tribunals, perceptions of transitional justice slowly changed and the retributive justice paradigm opened up (Leebaw, 2008; Millar, 2011). Truth commissions were reframed as a part of “restorative justice”,

describing “the idea that justice must involve an effort to “restore” a lost balance and that prosecution is not the only, or the best, means to attain this balance” (Leebaw, 2008, 104). Furthermore, transitional justice was no longer viewed as an obstacle to national reconciliation, but rather as an essential part of this process (Skaar, 2012). The outcomes of different institutions thus resulted in the reconceptualization of transitional justice in apolitical terms (Leebaw, 2008).

2.5 Justice, Truth and Reconciliation

Nowadays, truth commissions are accepted by peacebuilding practitioners as an integral component of transitional justice and post-conflict recovery (Leebaw, 2008). While other mechanisms of transitional justice deal with prosecution, state reform and lustration, truth commission primarily focus on truth-seeking (Zupan, 2006). Based on the assumption that justice requires the truth about the conflictive past to be uncovered (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 852), truth commissions are “set up to investigate and report on a pattern of past human rights abuses” (Hayner, 2001, p. 5). According to Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 3), truth commissions are theorized to “provide a far more comprehensive record of past history than the trials of specific individuals and do so in a less divisive manner”. In essence, truth commissions therefore surpass the capacity of criminal justice institutions and are able to “render a moral judgement about what was wrong and unjustifiable” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 3). By condemning past behavior and assessing responsibility, truth commissions base their legitimacy on the assumption that truth *is* justice (Chapman & Ball, 2001).

Furthermore, truth commissions also base their legitimacy on the assumption that without truth, there can be no reconciliation (Espinosa et al., 2017). In constructing a record of past history, truth commissions facilitate the transformation of individual stories and events into “threads of a new national narrative” (Andrews, 2003, p. 46). This process of collective memory construction is theorized to avert acts of revenge and violence and inspire greater respect for human rights (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 852). According to Borneman (2002, p. 281), averting acts of revenge points to the most narrow understanding of reconciliation, defined as a mutual desire for non-recurrence of violence. Andrews (2003, p. 63) adds that the uncovering of the ‘truth’ about the past contributes to the creation of a collective memory *of shared understandings*, representing “a journey out of darkness into light”. This implies that to reconcile can also mean to share an understanding. A third form of reconciliation is provided by Andrieu (2010, pp. 541-542), who argues that “doling out justice is seen as a prerequisite for reconciliation and, as a vital part of this process, truth is supposed to heal and reunite the people affected by the conflict”. Along similar lines, Clark (2008, p. 331) argues that restorative justice mechanisms shift focus from individual guilt and punishment to addressing the violation of relationships within society and searching for solutions that promote community repair, providing “the greatest potential to initiate and further reconciliation”. It can therefore be argued that reconciliation in its many forms, meaning non-recurrence of violence, understanding, healing or repairing, and reuniting, is assumed to be advanced by means of truth-seeking.

These assumptions, however, have not remained uncontested. According to Borneman (2002, p. 282), the construction of a shared collective memory may also inspire counterproductive efforts. McGratten and Hopkins (2017, p. 489) support this view and argue that, in deeply divided societies, practices concerning war memories can lead to contestation and may potentially be manipulated by opposing sides to deepen divisions as opposed to reconciling them. Andrieu (2010, p. 541) is equally critical of the theorized positive relationship between truth-seeking and reconciliation and concludes that “[i]n reality [...], the search for justice and a common ‘truth’ is often problematic and can have divisive consequences”. It can therefore be argued that although discourses concerning transitional

justice have changed, due to its apolitical reconceptualization, tensions between justice and reconciliation persist (Leebaw, 2008).

According to Chapman and Ball (2001), this is in part due to the kind of 'truth' that truth commissions aim to construct. They argue that while many perceive this truth to be "a single objective reality waiting to be discovered or found", it is in fact the product of a series of choices and constraints (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 4). Along similar lines, Andrews (2003, p. 46) argues that: "[t]ruth commissions are not, however, mere conduits for stories; rather they wield an important influence on which stories are told and how they are to be interpreted". Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 8) therefore argue that "truth commissions 'shape' or socially construct rather than 'find' the truth", often resulting in certain biases and exclusions. Furthermore, like any other discourse, the 'truth' investigated by truth commissions is a reflection of specific worldviews, perspectives and context, meaning that it will likely encounter competing views and contestation (Chapman & Ball, 2001). These choices, perspectives and corresponding implications, shaping a truth commission's conception of 'truth', are discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.6 A truth commission's investigation: level of inquiry

According to Hayner (2011), the different contexts within which truth commissions operate have resulted in a range of different approaches to truth seeking, creating a diversity of practices and producing a mixed body of results. She argues that each new truth commission and its impact is different from the last, taking the approach of "closely studying other experiences, incorporating some of the more useful elements, while crafting something new and different, basing the new inquiries in national needs and historical context" (Hayner, 2011, p. 236). Chapman and Ball (2001) add that these different approaches are often shaped by political compromise, restrictions and pre-established priorities, resulting in a highly selective truth-seeking process. This process is predominantly framed by a commission's mandate, incorporating selections concerning objects of investigation and methodology. These selections reflect clear choices regarding what is significant and what is not and have distinct implications regarding the construction of 'truth' (Chapman & Ball, 2001).

2.6.1 Objects of investigation & their implications

The first distinction that can be made between different truth commissions is based on their objects of investigation, meaning the specific crimes they are mandated to investigate (Moon, 2006). In the case of the South African TRC, 'gross violations of human rights' were identified as the objects of investigation, operationalized to include categories "such as 'killing', 'torture', 'abduction', 'severe ill treatment' and so on" (Moon, 2006, p. 260). A further specification was made to include only those crimes committed with a 'political objective', effectively excluding structural violations from the commission's investigation (Moon, 2006, p. 260). According to Moon (2006, p. 260), this specification was the product of peace negotiations, which resulted in the compromise that "all parties to the conflict should be subject to scrutiny". In effect, she argues that by identifying and investigating crimes committed with a 'political objective', the TRC therefore constructed a specific truth that narrated South Africa's history as a period of "politically motivated violations" and promoted the notion that all parties were equally responsible. Had the objects of investigation been selected and defined differently, to include for instance the structural violence that was "crucial to apartheid's project of 'separate development'", then a different 'truth' might have been narrated that focused on "oppression, exploitation, cruelty, just war or revolution" (Moon, 2006, p. 260).

According to a number of scholars, this exclusion of structural violence by the TRC represents a missed opportunity, which could have been used to shed light on the system of apartheid and

corresponding decades of injustice (Mamdani, 1996; Young, 2004; Aiken, 2016). Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 13) argue that this system “arguably had a far more profound and abusive impact on the population” than the identified ‘gross violations of human rights’, and should therefore be the focus of research. Hayner (2011, p. 236) adds that, taking a different approach, the Kenyan truth commission *did* incorporate the investigation of economic crimes, successfully opening up “a new and challenging realm” of truth commission work.

This distinction between different types of crimes also directly relates to the second distinction, concerning specific victim representations. Mani (2005) argues that by focusing on specific crimes, most truth commissions deploy narrow definitions of what the concept ‘victim’ entails. By doing so, Leebaw (2008) argues that those who identify themselves as victims but who are excluded from the official proceedings remain to feel marginalized. Examples of this type of exclusion are the South African TRC, where only victims of ‘gross violations of human rights’ were involved, and Chile’s truth commission, where victims of torture were ignored (Leebaw, 2008). In the case of Guatemala, this selectiveness concerned specific social groups, resulting in a focus on the Indian population and the exclusion of the majority of the non-indigenous population (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 8).

In sum, it can therefore be argued that a truth commission’s selection regarding the objects of investigation contributes to the construction of a specific narrative on the past, containing representations of the nature of the violence, assigned responsibility and victim identities.

2.6.2 Methodology and results: Micro- versus macro-truth

In order to investigate these crimes, truth commissions can take different methodological approaches (Chapman & Ball, 2001; Hayner, 2011). According to Chapman and Ball (2001), the main difference in approaches concerns the distinction between the legal and social science traditions and their corresponding implications. In short, a legal approach departs from a specific argument and collects evidence in support of this argument, often leading to the exclusion of contradictory evidence. The dominance of this approach in truth commission work is reflected by the frequent use of ‘juridical categories’ to describe specific violations, derived from international law and standards. Alternatively, a social science approach asks questions, drafts hypotheses and gathers a random selection of data, which will either support *or* reject these hypotheses. The latter approach is therefore open to “the possibility of finding the unexpected and refuting underlying assumptions”, while the former is not (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 22). Furthermore, the social science approach is also more adapt to making generalizations based on large volumes of data and identifying specific patterns (Chapman & Ball, 2001).

According to Chapman and Ball (2001), these distinct methodological approaches also point to a difference in focus adopted by truth commissions concerning the investigation of human rights crimes. In discussing these different focal points, Hayner (2011, 236) observes that for instance the South Korean commission was predominantly concerned with investigating specific massacres, while the German commission “focused more closely on the broad impact of a system, rather than a highly individualized approach to violations”. Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 7) argue that this distinction represents the difference between investigating truth at the ‘micro-level’ or at the ‘macro-level’. They state that a micro-truth is constructed by taking a detail-oriented approach to specific events and individual cases, while a macro-truth concerns the trends, patterns, causes, organizational structures and legitimizations of violence on the societal level (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 7). According to Hayner (2011, p. 235), the latter approach to investigating abuses often includes a “deeper analysis of historical and societal factors and consequences, such as racism and economic discrimination”, as was the case in Peru and Guatemala. She adds that some commissions reach back even further, investigating “fundamental historical issues that help define community relationships of today”

(Hayner, 2011, p. 236). Due to the depth of the required analysis, Chapman and Ball (2001) argue that this macro-truth is most effectively constructed by means of a social science approach.

Alternatively, when constructing micro-truth, truth commissions predominantly favor a legal approach (Chapman & Ball, 2001). During the investigation of specific cases or events, they are often faced with overwhelming volumes of data that have to be processed in limited timeframes with limited resources (Chapman & Ball, 2001). According to Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 8), they therefore have to be selective in what they include in their report, often resulting in a focus on specific “window cases”. Based on certain moral and practical considerations, these commissions therefore include and exclude based on what they deem to be significant or representative (Chapman & Ball, 2001). In the case of South Africa, these considerations regarding significance led to “an over representation of whites, [and] a preference for including leaders of the struggle over less well-known victims” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 8). In the case of Guatemala, the commission selected cases that illustrated “an important tactical or strategic change”, “a special impact on the national conscience” or “a particular pattern of violence” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, pp. 22-23). In commenting on the selection of specific window cases, Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 23) conclude that “they were chosen to make specific points, not to test a generalization”, pointing to the dominance of the legal tradition.

These distinct levels of inquiry, however, are not mutually exclusive and are usually mixed to create a comprehensive record of the past. According to Chapman and Ball (2001), truth commissions predominantly investigate micro-truth as a point of departure for a more thorough and meaningful analysis of macro-truth. In the case of the South African TRC, however, they argue that it predominantly favored a legal approach to investigating truth at the micro-level and assigned limited relevance to the social science approach needed to investigate the macro-level (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 10). By taking a highly individualized approach to investigating past abuses, “the dynamics of the apartheid system” were largely ignored (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 14). Furthermore, this focus on individual cases resulted in assessments of individual responsibility regarding specific perpetrators, meaning that the TRC allowed “white South Africans who were the supporters and beneficiaries of apartheid” to evade accountability (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 14). In reference to this shortcoming, Aiken (2016) argues that by failing to address the broader impact of the system, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was limited in its contribution to social healing. It can therefore be argued that, similar to the selection of objects of investigation, the chosen level of inquiry also contributes to the construction of representations that shape the ‘truth’ about the past.

In concluding on these different methodological approaches and focal points, Chapman and Ball (2001) argue that the construction of an authoritative historical record on past abuses requires thorough social scientific research. Rather than exclusively focusing on the micro-level and “accumulating anecdotal evidence to support widely held beliefs about what has happened and who is responsible” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 4), truth commissions must aim to uncover hidden violations and paint a comprehensive picture of the broader system in which these crimes were committed by means of conducting deep research. Furthermore, they state that the personal daily experiences concerning events and crimes are already mostly familiar to victims and the general public; “they lived it, after all” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 42). Alternatively, “[p]atterns, trends, tendencies, and the big picture are often the pieces most missing from the history of transitional societies” (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 42). In order to provide a valuable deeper understanding about the past, and convince victims “that they were not alone, and that the perpetrators were not a few “bad apples””, truth commissions must therefore focus their effort on the macro-level of inquiry (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 42).

2.7 A truth commission's evolving discourses

According to Millar (2011), the work of contemporary truth commissions has evolved far beyond a narrow focus on investigating human rights crimes by means of scientific approaches. While the first truth commissions, in Latin America, Sri Lanka and Uganda, merely emphasized the what and why of past conflictive events, more recent commissions have each added to the expanding focus of formal truth seeking (Hayner, 2011). In different phases, truth commissions have pioneered practices concerning for instance truth-telling, public hearings and reparations (Hayner, 2011, pp. 235-236). Common objectives have similarly evolved, from a singular focus on establishing an authoritative historical record of past abuses, to the inclusion of aims like providing recognition to victims and promoting dialogue (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 852). It can therefore be argued that since the birth of the restorative justice paradigm, truth commission discourses have evolved and expanded to incorporate a number of other practices and objectives.

In addressing these different practices, objectives and their corresponding representations deployed by truth commissions, Chapman and Ball (2001) refer to a useful distinction made by the South African TRC. In reflecting on its own work, the TRC recognized the construction of different types of truth, including: "factual or forensic truth, personal or narrative truth, social or "dialogue" truth, and healing and restorative truth" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 10). Forensic truth encompasses the 'objective' investigation of human rights crimes, narrative truth refers to individual testimony and the practice of truth-telling, social or 'dialogue' truth encompasses practices that involve the public and elicit debate and restorative truth is related to acknowledging victims' suffering and inspiring reconciliation (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 11). According to Bock (2008, p. 35), this recognition of different truths reflects the TRC's acknowledgement "of the difficulty of establishing a single uncontested version of past events". Most truth commissions, however, only refer to forensic truth when speaking of *the* 'truth' they are mandated to investigate (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 10). It can therefore be argued that truth commissions not only produce different representations, based on their selections and assumptions, but also have entirely different understandings of what 'truth' means or entails.

The extent to which truth commissions deploy different practices in order to construct different types of 'truth', can thus provide insight in their understanding of 'truth' as a concept. Do their different practices point to the construction of one 'truth', or do these practices contribute to the construction of multiple versions of past events, reflecting a more complex understanding of 'truth'? Furthermore, Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 12) argue that the TRC's conception of different types of 'truth' was based on the notion that a truth commission's objectives can be contradictory. More specifically, when forced to choose between truth and reconciliation, reflecting a contradiction between forensic truth and restorative truth, the TRC chose reconciliation (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 12). This final section discusses these different types of 'truth', or discourses, the assumptions on which they are based, and their corresponding implications.

2.7.1 Forensic discourse

According to Chapman and Ball (2001), forensic truth encompasses the investigation of human rights crimes by means of collecting factual or objective evidence, thereby representing the 'objective' or analytical dimension of a truth commission's proceedings. By investigating a specific period of violations, truth commissions create a "comprehensive record of past history" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 3). According to Orlandi (2014, p. 108), by creating an 'authoritative account', truth commissions create "better conditions for further measures of justice".

As discussed in the previous section, however, this constructed record or 'truth' is shaped by a series of selections and pre-established priorities, meaning that the objectivity of this record can be called into question. Nonetheless, truth commissions base their legitimacy on this perception of objectivity, by means of employing rigorous methods and consulting authoritative data sources such as domestic and foreign government archives, institutional records, forensic investigations including exhumation and identification, and historical sources and expertise (Chapman & Ball, 2001; Laplante & Theidon, 2007). According to Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 4), the authority of the constructed record is aided by investigating the past "in an objective and careful manner consistent with strict standards of historical and social science research". Corresponding with the macro-level of inquiry, this type of investigation requires "extensive research, advanced methods for data collection and processing, and a complex information management system leading to analysis and interpretation of the findings" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 7).

Furthermore, the construction of forensic truth by means of a specific analytical approach is also shaped by the people involved (Chapman & Ball, 2001). According to Chapman and Ball (2001), the selection of commissioners and staff can depend upon a variety of considerations. They argue that "[s]ome commissioners are chosen in order to represent particular ethnic or political constituencies, while others are chosen as nonpartisan experts on key subjects" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 17). Types of experts employed by truth commissions can largely be divided in two groups, including those with a legal background and those with a background in social science, often representing the different approaches identified as a legal approach to micro-truth and a social science approach to macro-truth (Chapman & Ball, 2001).

Ultimately, however, the construction of Forensic truth also depends upon the importance attributed to a commission's other dimensions (Chapman & Ball, 2001).

2.7.2 Narrative discourse

Narrative truth is constructed by means of truth-telling, defined as the disclosing of personal accounts of past violence in dialogue or to the public (Millar, 2011), and represents one of the main practices deployed by truth commissions (Chapman & Ball, 2001). According to Chapman and Ball (2001), this practice is solely focused on individual testimony and experience, representing the 'subjective' dimension of a truth commission's work. They state that, especially when related to trauma, "[m]emory is inherently subjective and open to change over time" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 5). Due to a "variety of interpretative factors, including community, cultural, or traditional myths and personal fantasies", recollections by different people concerning one specific event can lead to entirely different 'truths' (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 6). They therefore argue that narrative truth should not be conflated with factual or forensic truth (Chapman & Ball, 2001). Objectivity, however, is not the purpose of narrative truth. Alternatively, truth-telling is theorized to provide "official spaces for previously marginalized or silenced populations to share their stories" (Leebaw, 2008, p. 112), and promote 'catharsis' and psychological healing (Andrews, 2003; Young, 2004 & Bar-On, 2010). According to Andrews (2003), these notions are based on the assumption that the act of telling allows those affected by the conflict to process what they experienced, representing a key step in the road to healing and reconciliation. In other words, Bar-On (2010, p. 199) argues that this process can result in individual healing when all involved parties 'work through' their feelings concerning past traumatic events, meaning that "openly and verbally coping in some way with the painful past is preferable to silencing it" (Bar-On, 2010, p. 199).

According to Shaw (2005, p. 7), these assumptions regarding truth-telling and healing are derived from Western memory culture, which developed based on ideas about church confessions, the importance of verbal coping strategies in treating post-traumatic stress disorder, and the remembrance initiatives in the aftermath of the Holocaust. She argues, however, that different

historical processes across the globe have yielded alternative healing strategies, which may “compete with globalized forms of remembering” (Shaw, 2005, p. 7). Along similar lines, Millar (2011) argues that the design and establishment of transitional justice mechanisms is traditionally dominated by the West, resulting in Western conceptions of justice that rarely correspond with local traditions and needs. Hayner (2011, p. 4) therefore argues that the notion that truth-telling has a healing or ‘cathartic’ effect on victims is questionable at best. She states that assumptions about truth-telling are thoughtlessly reproduced by both scholars and practitioners to justify the establishment or existence of truth commissions, but that these practices often have the opposite effect. This is supported by the United States Institute of Peace (2005), providing evidence indicating that in some cases telling stories of trauma equals reliving them, meaning that participating in truth commissions can be a re-traumatizing experience. Several case studies, in South Africa, Rwanda and Chile, find similar negative effects, including a surge in sadness, anger and fear among truth commission participants (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 854). Young (2004, p. 152) therefore argues that truth-telling is often equated with ‘opening old wounds’. Based on a study in Cape Town, which found that over half of the TRC’s participants experienced more negative emotions after providing testimony, Shaw (2005, p. 7) concludes that “[a] truth commission is not therapy”.

Individual healing, however, is not the only presumed benefit of truth-telling. According to Young (2004, p. 147), the power of truth commissions is in part determined by the degree of intimacy of the individual testimonies. Testimonies are often framed by commissioners to be deeply personal, focused on the body and the experienced harm (Young, 2004). Referring to a vivid description of torture, obtained in testimony from a South African activist, Young (2004, p. 147) argues:

“There is something deeply disconcerting about this degree of intimacy, spoken publicly, and yet it is precisely this discomfort, this crossing of boundaries, that generates the authenticity that in turn validates and authorizes the Commission itself.”

In short, intimacy provides authenticity to the narrative, and it is this understanding of truth within the story that is needed to convince the public and legitimize the proceedings of the commission (Young, 2004). It can therefore be argued that Narrative truth is also constructed to contribute to the Social dimension of a truth commission’s work and provide legitimacy to its narrative.

A narrow focus on the intimate experiences of victims, however, has also inspired critique. According to Mani (2005), this effectively means that large parts of the population who are identified or identify themselves as ‘survivors’, as opposed to ‘victims’, are excluded from the truth-telling process (Mani, 2005). In the case of the TRC, Mamdani (1996) argues that its focus on the individual experience of specific victims took away from acknowledging the struggle of all black South Africans under apartheid. He argues that the commission therefore failed to reshape public debate and ignored the truth it should have dealt with, meaning “the experience of apartheid as a banal reality” (Mamdani, 1996, p. 4). Along similar lines, Andrieu (2010) argues that the so-called “truth” generated by truth commissions often represents a generalized and victim-centric version, which fails to resonate with the majority of people within society. Furthermore, Young (2004) argues that this focus on the experiences of a select few not only marginalizes the suffering of others, but also limits a wider sense of responsibility in society. She states that:

“[W]hen reconciliation in an entire nation rests on the experiences of individuals, recast through the language of the church and psychotherapy in terms of “healing” and “absolution,” the rest of society may feel entitled not to consider itself implicated in apartheid’s atrocities and injustices, and to celebrate “healing” and reconciliation without any real engagement with the pain of apartheid.” (Young, 2004, p. 149)

Interestingly, Andrieu (2010) adds that these narrow and top-down conceptions of truth and victimhood ultimately contribute to divisions and competing narratives within society, thereby promoting fragmentation as opposed to reconciliation.

In short, it can be argued that, within the contemporary discursive order established by the West, truth commissions frequently reproduce narrative discourses based on the assumption that truth-telling equals healing. Views on the implications of these discourses vary, regarding the impact on the people involved and the constructed 'truth'. The largely victim-centric narrative 'truth' provides authenticity to the commission's narrative, but may also re-traumatize participants, marginalize the experiences of others, limit social awareness regarding responsibility and promote fragmentation. Whether the constructed 'truth' excludes segments of society and promotes representations of limited or individual responsibility is thus in part determined by *the extent* to which a commission focusses on individual experience. However, it is also determined by a commission's dedication to 'social truth'.

2.7.3 Social discourse

As argued by Chapman and Ball (2001), social or 'dialogue' truth encompasses practices that engage the public in the proceedings of truth commissions. It can be defined as "the truth of experience that is established through interaction, discussion and debate" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 11). Furthermore, this "translation of a private into a public truth, requires widespread dissemination of the findings of a truth commission", by means of public hearings, outreach, involvement of the media and publication of the final report (Chapman & Ball, p. 35). According to Leebaw (2008), this public dimension of a truth commission's work is theorized to create much-needed awareness of past abuses among the population and inspire social healing.

The underlying assumption is that sharing personal accounts of past violence with the population contributes to the construction of a 'collective memory', meaning "a shared understanding of past events", which is arguably necessary for restoring a sense of community or 'social solidarity' in post-conflict societies (Millar, 2011, p. 521). Along similar lines, Orlandi (2014, p. 107) argued that public truth-telling "turns deeply divided societies into communities by fostering dialogue". Andrews (2003) refers to this process as the mutually reinforcing relationship between the collective and the individual story. Not only does the creation of the collective memory help individuals to process loss and obtain understanding, the individual experience also contributes to the nation's grand narrative on the past and thereby inspires national healing (Andrews, 2003). She adds that "[r]econciliation is facilitated, inter alia, by telling one another stories, as a basis for getting to know the other – for understanding the nature of their suffering and their aspirations" (Andrews, 2003, p. 46). Bar-On (2010) explains this process in terms of a dialogue between opposing parties, wherein personal stories break through so-called 'paradigmatic narratives', or dominant competing narratives:

"The fundamental assumption here is that the personal story, if presented openly and honestly, may help to create and facilitate the development of positive feelings of empathy and openness among participants from the "other side," thereby breaking through the stalemate created by the opposing paradigmatic narratives." (Bar-On, 2010, p. 199)

In other words, Bar-On (2010) argues that mutual understanding achieved by sharing individual stories can bridge the divide that was created or enforced by competing narratives within post-conflict society. By inspiring empathy and openness, the sharing of stories is theorized to contribute to reconciliation.

According to Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 11), the South African TRC was the first commission to focus on the importance of dialogue, by implementing public hearings. Kelsall (2005, p. 368) argues

that truth commissions frame these public hearings by selecting specific testimonies from the thousands of statements they receive, based not only on whether they are representative, but also on whether they have “particularly graphic stories to tell”. These testimonies are intended to be demonstrative, “designed to have a powerful public effect” (Kelsall, 2005, p. 368). As discussed in relation to Narrative discourse, Young (2004) argued that this powerful effect is created by intimacy, which is needed for the audience to accept the authenticity of the constructed narrative. Gobodo-Madikizela (2008, p. 70) adds that the powerful impact created by these testimonies is intended to elicit emotions among the audience, inspire ‘compassionate listening’ and empathy, and transform the public space into a platform for emphatic dialogue about the past and the mending of broken relationships within society.

Public hearings, however, predominantly engage the public in a passive manner. In the case of Sierra Leone, Kelsall (2005) observes that the audience was encouraged to refrain from commenting and simply observe. In essence, this results in their exclusion from the process and the marginalization of their perspectives and suffering, resulting in a victim-centric narrative that fails to resonate with the majority of society (as discussed in Section 2.7.2 ‘Narrative discourse’). An alternative is offered in the case of Timor-Leste’s Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, which actively involved the audience in the public hearings (Nannelli, 2009). By deploying traditional reconciliatory mechanisms, the commission elicited testimony from perpetrators of relatively minor crimes in a setting that was intended to reintegrate them into society. These testimonies were then discussed by community members, the perpetrators and commissioners, until they arrived at a “communally accepted truth” (Nannelli, 2009, p. 35). Furthermore, similar sessions were organized to negotiate the created historical record, combining communal perspectives on the conflict. According to Nannelli (2009, p. 36), these discussions inspired “a sense of shared understanding” within local communities, contributing more effectively to reconciliation. Additionally, Webster (2007, p. 582) argues that this provided participants with a sense of ownership, creating a multi-perspective narrative on the past constructed for the people *and* by the people.

These practices, constructing what you could call a negotiated ‘truth’, relate to views on deliberation, defined as “a reasoned exchange of arguments that considers views of others” (Kostovicova, 2017, p. 159). In addressing the use of views on deliberation in post-conflict settings, Kostovicova (2017, p. 159) states that “scholars have found that deliberation across the ethnic divide is challenging, but possible”. Since successful deliberation can only be achieved by respecting others, listening to reason and perceiving all parties as equal, its execution can be problematic in ethnically fragmented societies. When successful, however, it can “reconstruct post-conflict societies along inclusive civic, as opposed to exclusive ethnic, lines”, referred to as “deliberative reconciliation” (Kostovicova, 2017, p. 159). In applying this perspective to the work of truth commissions, it can therefore be argued that the process of negotiating and deliberating on the construction of a ‘truth’ accepted by all, can possibly contribute to reconciliation in divided societies.

By critically reflecting on the institution of voluntary participation, however, a light is shed on the downside of this negotiated narrative in the case of Timor-Leste (Nannelli, 2009). According to Nannelli (2009, p. 37), the majority of refugees living in West Timor and a vast number of ‘minor’ perpetrators refrained from testifying and could not be forced to do so, suggesting that “people whose stories ran counter to the majority may have chosen not to come forward and that dissenting voices are subsequently underrepresented in the CAVR records”. This lack of alternative voices was exacerbated by issues regarding retribution and Timor-Leste’s troubled relationship with Indonesia, meaning that high-ranking military officers and militiamen have not contributed their perspectives (Nannelli, 2009). Nannelli (2009, p. 38) concludes that due to political considerations and tensions, the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) has been unable to create a truly all-encompassing and multi-perspective narrative on the past, which “will [likely] be a contentious area in

the not too distant future". Although she merely expresses an expectation, her statement does imply that the incorporation of multiple perspectives is important in creating an uncontested narrative.

In short, it can be argued that social discourses are focused on the relationship between people in post-conflict society, represented as mutual understanding, openness and empathy, and on the relationship between people and truth, represented as awareness, acceptance and/or ownership. Principally, these discourses are based on assumptions about the positive relationship between 'collective memory' and reconciliation. In its narrow conception, social 'truth' is constructed by raising awareness among the population concerning past abuses, eliciting dialogue and ensuring acceptance of the constructed narrative. It is questionable, however, whether acceptance can be achieved without including the perspectives of different segments of society. Alternatively, some truth commissions therefore promote active participation, inviting the public or communities to contribute to and negotiate the construction of a record of past abuses. Theoretically, the construction of social 'truth' is thus shaped by the level of participation of the targeted audience.

2.7.4 Restorative discourse

According to Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 12), restorative discourses focus on acknowledgement of past violations, reflecting the "overarching political objective of almost all truth commissions". This is assumed to be a vital process in post-conflict societies, since "official acknowledgment of abuses can support the credibility of victims' suffering and help restore their dignity" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 35). One of the main ways in which truth commissions construct restorative truth is by placing facts in their "political context of power between social actors, in historical context of the sequence of contingent events, and in the ideological context in which contending visions of the social world compete" (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 11). Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 11) argue that by placing events within a context of power struggles, history and ideology, truth commissions acknowledge that people's experiences of these events are real, meaning that their pain is also real and worthy of recognition.

In reflecting on the narration of these contexts, Moon (2006, p. 258) argues that truth commissions purposely construct a story about "transition from past violence to future reconciliation", in which the telling of the story is intended to inspire social healing. In essence, this narrative form entails the selective narration of past events, attributing them with meaning in a 'causal and linear relationship' with an imagined future (Moon, 2006, p. 269). In the case of restorative truth, this means that truth commissions represent reconciliation as the ultimate state of being that must and will be achieved, by selectively representing past events that point to this imagined future (Moon, 2006). Along similar lines, Webster (2007, p. 582) refers to this process as the creation of a "useable past" or grand narrative, as opposed to a purely objective record, in order to promote a peaceful future and contribute to a grand nation-building project. Basu (2008, p. 239) reflects on this narrative form in the case of the Sierra Leonean TRC and argues that, in order to inspire unity, its final report presents the myth of a 'harmonious' society that was gravely disrupted by colonialist interventions. He argues that this 'fairytale' of peaceful co-existence and the blame attributed to colonialism stand in stark contrast to what has commonly been documented and written about Sierra Leone's past, painting a picture of a long history of conflicts and massacres. He therefore questions the TRC's ability to provide an impartial historical record and argues that the commission's main purpose, of providing a "foundational narrative for a newly unified and reconciled Sierra Leone" (Basu, 2008, p. 237), is in conflict with any attempt at objectivity. In the case of the South African TRC, Moon (2006, p. 270) argues that it ignored any responsibility of the uniquely abusive system of apartheid. Instead, it narrated a story of past violence dating back to the 17th century, in order to highlight a 'continuity' of violence that legitimizes the objective of reconciliation (Moon, 2006, p. 270). In reflecting on these restorative truths, Chapman and Ball (2001) argue that the highly selective narration of these macro-

contexts can sometimes contradict the forensic truth investigated by truth commissions. It can therefore be argued that although commissions construct different types of narratives on the past, they are usually selective in their approach of working towards a specific imagined future.

One way in which these objectives of acknowledgement and future reconciliation are more explicitly enacted, is through apology. According to Gobodo-Madikizela (2008), public hearings often involve the framing of interaction between perpetrators and victims in terms of apologies and forgiveness. She argues that this interaction provides acknowledgement and enables victims to move on.

“When perpetrators express remorse, when they finally acknowledge that they can see what they earlier could not see, or did not want to, they are revalidating the victim’s pain—in a sense, giving his or her humanity back to him. Empowered and revalidated, many victims at this point find it natural to extend and deepen the healing process by going a step further: turning around and conferring forgiveness on their torturer.” (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008, p. 69)

According to Young (2004), these interactions are not only framed to provide acknowledgement to victims, but also function as a metaphor for social healing or reconciliation due to their enactment in front of an audience.

The success of these reconciliatory interactions is discussed by Kelsall (2005) in the case of Sierra Leone, where closing ceremonies were organized at the end of public hearings (Kelsall, 2005). According to Kelsall (2005), these ceremonies were framed by religious discourse, with religious leaders frequently referring to blessings and forgiveness, and by tribal rituals. Emotionally charged apologies were enacted by the perpetrators followed by a traditional closing ritual, which “struck deeply resonant chords with the participants and forged a reconciliatory moment, even in the absence of truth” (Kelsall, 2005, p. 363). In this context, ‘truth’ refers to forensic or narrative truth, which had not been obtained from the perpetrators during the problematic phase of gathering testimonies (Kelsall, 2005). Based on this ultimate moment of reconciling guided by religious and tribal traditions, Kelsall (2005, p. 363) therefore concludes that “ritual may be more important to reconciliation than truth”.

Another important consideration in providing acknowledgement to victims is recognition of their economic situation, by means of reparations. Although truth commissions are generally not responsible for the implementation of reparation-related policy, they do play an important role in establishing recommendations (Espinosa et al., 2017). By selectively investigating specific human rights crimes and defining who the official ‘victims’ are, truth commissions predetermine who is eligible for reparations (Aiken, 2016; Backer, 2010). Laplante and Theidon (2007) argue that, as a specific type of justice, reparations are often perceived to symbolize acknowledgement and accountability by the state. Where for instance retributive justice would be unable to hold the state as a single entity accountable, reparations represent a way of “making the government pay” for the perceived failure to protect the population (Laplante & Theidon, 2007, p. 245). In contexts characterized by poverty, however, calls for justice and accountability are primarily linked to “the struggle to survive” (Laplante & Theidon, 2007, 243). In the case of public hearings in Sierra Leone, Kelsall (2005, p. 370) observes that “when asked by the Commissioners for their recommendations, most victims pointed to their dire economic plight as individuals [...] and urged the government, or the Commission itself, to come to their assistance”. Similarly, in the case of Peru, Laplante and Theidon (2007, p. 240) argue that the majority of victims was motivated to participate in the commission’s public hearings by expectations regarding redress, expressing “the desire for restorative justice through reparations”.

When expectations regarding reparations are not met, however, this can lead to widespread frustration and rejection of a truth commission’s work among victims (Laplante & Theidon, 2007;

Espinosa et al., 2017). In the case of Peru, where the painful process of recounting traumatic events was not followed up by direct compensation, victims increasingly voiced negative attitudes towards the concepts of remembering and truth-telling (Espinosa et al., 2017, p. 862). In the case of South Africa, lacking implementation of reparation policies also resulted in negative attitudes towards the TRC and its capacity to provide justice (Aiken, 2016, p. 200). Although the government was responsible for the implementation of this reparations program, Laplante and Theidon (2007, p. 241) argue that these decisions nevertheless reflected poorly on the TRC's credibility and its ability to construct an accepted 'truth'. Based on these experiences regarding reparations, Laplante and Theidon (2007, p. 241) conclude:

“Thus the restorative justice component of the transitional formula still remains an ideal. Moreover, as the authors speculate, maintaining the positive effects of the truth commission seems to be inextricably linked to the realization of follow-up measures such as reparations. Truth alone is insufficient.”

In short, restorative discourses are focused on the concept of acknowledgement, based on the assumption that acknowledgement validates victims' suffering and restores their dignity. Acknowledgement comes in many forms, including narrative form by means of constructing a 'useable past' and 'imagined future' focused on reconciliation, symbolic form by means of staging apologies and forgiveness, and monetary form by means of recommending compensation. As discussed, different forms of restorative 'truth' have been argued to replace or counter other types of 'truth', meaning that the extent to which a commission prioritizes acknowledgement and reconciliation has implications for the other dimensions of its work and its general conception of 'truth'.

2.11 Concluding remarks

What has become clear is that truth commissions take different approaches to the construction of 'truth', resulting in diverse narratives on the past with distinct implications. Furthermore, due to the different objectives and dimensions of a truth commission's work, the diversity of practices can yield contradicting and confusing outcomes (Chapman & Ball, 2001). According to Nannelli (2009, p. 38), however, these discrepancies are unsurprising, since a truth commission's narrative is burdened with “the complex task of acknowledging the pain, suffering, and loss experienced by individuals and communities; of acknowledging the wrongs of the past; of providing some form of redress for victims and their families; and of rebuilding a sense of belonging to the nation and of shared identity”. According to Hayner (2011), this complex set of objectives creates grand expectations concerning a truth commission's impact, which are often unrealistic and lead to almost certain disappointment. Due to overwhelming mandates and volumes of data, truth commissions are forced to focus on what they deem most significant and important, commonly resulting in exclusions and stereotypical representations. As argued by Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 12), the reconciliatory goals of restorative discourse sometimes contradict the forensic truth that truth commissions are mandated to investigate. When the focus is mainly on reconciliation and personal experience, broader societal injustices will likely remain unaddressed (Young, 2004).

In relation to these exclusions, Chapman and Ball (2001, p. 41) argue that truth commissions should focus on the objective macro-level of investigation. Although processes that arguably provide healing, acknowledgement and reconciliation are equally important, they should not be conflated with objective 'truth', since this “weakens the political and moral importance of truth by making truth a matter of personal opinion, and not the product of verifiable scientific best practices” (Chapman &

Ball, 2001, p. 42). Conversely, Andrieu (2010, p. 542) argues that, when adopting this approach, truth commissions “offer an official version of the past that can hardly have an impact on people’s real beliefs”. By “imposing a top-down, authoritative historical account of the past”, truth commissions mask “the plurality of different individual experiences”, which greatly contributes to the risk of aggravating competing narratives (Andrieu, 2010, p. p. 542). What these competing views indicate, similar to what has been discussed in this literature review, is that there is no consensus on what a truth commission should aspire to achieve and how it should construct ‘truth’. However, this is unsurprising, since the proceedings and outcomes of truth commissions are highly dependent upon the context in which they operate (Hayner, 2011). According to Hayner (2011, p. 237), research on truth commissions, which is generally focused on a select number of prominent cases, should therefore pay more attention to a greater number of contexts and commissions. One can only examine the complex and contextual nature of constructing ‘truth’ by expanding the field of study and investigating new cases, and ask: “What has been the impact, and what might it be?” (Hayner, 2011, p. 237).

In aiming to investigate a truth-seeking mechanism that is underrepresented in academic literature on truth commissions, the Initiative for RECOM, this literature review provides the conceptual framework for this study.

3 Methodology

This chapter discusses and justifies the selected methodology, which will be used to answer the following main question:

‘What conception of ‘truth’ is constructed by the Initiative for RECOM, concerning the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 until 2001 and their aftermath, and what are its implications?’

The aim of this study is to understand the way in which the Initiative for RECOM conceptualizes ‘truth’, by means of specific representations and practices, within its discursive context. This will provide a holistic insight into the ‘truth’ discourses produced and reproduced by RECOM and their implications regarding inclusion and exclusion. This aim will be achieved by means of a Critical Discourse Analysis, which is further specified in this chapter. This chapter discusses and justifies the selected research methods, the selected research units and the operationalization of the sub-questions that will be used to answer the main question.

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

3.1.1 Defining CDA

According to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000, p. 447), critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be defined as “a recent school of discourse analysis that concerns itself with relations of power and inequality in language”. They argue that, as one of the founding fathers of CDA, Norman Fairclough greatly influenced the development of discourse studies to increasingly focus on the relationship between linguistic features and discursive practices in the context of social change (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, pp. 447-449). According to Fairclough (2001a), CDA is characterized by its use in research concerning social issues of a controversial nature, in which language performs an important role. He states that, rather than seeing CDA as a specific method or technique, it is best understood as a “theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis [...] as one element or ‘moment’ of the material social process” (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 121). The application of this perspective on social processes and language in social science research is predominantly shaped by Foucault’s views on the power of discourse (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). As discussed in the literature review, Foucault (1971) argues that speech, or the material manifestation of discourse, determines the nature of human interaction by means of the ‘rules of exclusion’. Discourses entail a determination of what is prohibited, a division between reason and folly, and a division between true and false or a “will to truth”, shaping social life by means of its constitutive practices (Foucault, 1971, pp. 8-10). According to Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20), discourse analysis is thus based on the primary assumption that meaning, constituting social reality, is constructed by means of “interrelated bodies of texts – called discourses – that bring new ideas, objects and practices into the world”. It can therefore be argued that the theoretical perspective of critical discourse analysis is based on the assumption that discourse is power, constituting social reality by means of producing and reproducing meanings through language and practices.

According to Hardy et al. (2004), this primary assumption is related to epistemology and has distinct methodological implications. They argue that views on discourse as the construction of meaning is based on a “social constructivist epistemology”, entailing that “[s]ocial reality is not something that we uncover, but something that we actively create through meaningful interaction” (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 20). The dominance of this position on “the nature of reality, [and] the ways in

which we come to know it" is supported by Herrera and Braumoeller (2004, p. 16), who argue that "the embrace of the intersubjective construction and interpretation of reality is a core assumption of discourse analysis". According to Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20), this position on reality and the corresponding nature of discourse has resulted in the notion that "discourse analysis involves the systematic study of texts to find evidence of their meaning and how this meaning translates into a social reality". Along similar lines, Doel (2016, p. 224) argues that discourse analysis allows the researcher to examine the material images, or texts, through which discourses are produced and reproduced, and draw out "the meanings, values, dispositions, desires, knowledge, power relations, and practices that are encoded into it" (Doel, 2016, p. 223).

Furthermore, Doel (2016, p. 224) argues that those who attempt to examine the construction of meaning by means of material images "usually do so in terms of the social and spatial power struggle between 'dominant discourses' on the one hand, and 'discourses of resistance' (or 'dominated discourses') on the other hand" (Doel, 2016, p. 224). Along similar lines, Hook (2001, p. 3) argues that the power and materiality of a dominant discourse must be analyzed in relation to its productive and formative but also constraining and exclusionary capacity. Since this struggle between the dominant and the dominated is hierarchical, as the terms indicate, Doel (2016) argues that scholars often take a critical approach to discourse analysis. They not only analyze how specific representations and practices contribute to the dominance of discourses, but also examine "how one might resist and overturn them" (Doel, 2016, p. 225). Along similar lines, Fairclough (2001b, p. 230) argues that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is distinguished by its commitment to "progressive social change", by means of assessing how resistance to detrimental dominant discourses can be improved. CDA is therefore critical in the sense that it offers both negative and positive critiques. It does not simply examine a problem, but it also offers possibilities for social change (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 125). It can therefore be argued that the methodology known as critical discourse analysis is based on the assumption that the exclusions and inequalities shaping social reality can be examined, resisted and changed, by analyzing the constructed material meanings that constitute this reality.

3.1.2 Justification of methodology

In order to fulfil the aim of this study, critical discourse analysis provides the most appropriate methodology for three reasons. Firstly, as discussed in the literature review, truth commissions construct 'truth' by means of different approaches and a diversity of practices, resulting in a set of representations regarding for instance responsibility, the nature of the violence and the imagined future. According to Hall et al. (2013, p. XXV), such representations can only be comprehensively analyzed in relation to the concrete resources through which these meanings are constructed. This means that researching representations requires an analysis of the *material* images, being for instance symbols, pictures or texts, which communicate the *intended* image (Hall et al., 2013). According to Pleijter (2006), visual methodology, of which CDA is a specific type, is characterized by its use in examining material images. In contrast to other research methods, like interviews and questionnaires, a visual method's objects of observation do not consist of people, but of what people produce. These products, such as newspaper articles and television programs, are the material images which people construct to communicate meaning (Pleijter, 2006). If for instance interviews were selected as a method, the role of those who construct the images could be analyzed, including their motivations and actions. The content of the actual material image that is communicated to and impacts upon its intended audience, however, would remain elusive. In order to examine the Initiative for RECOM's representations regarding 'truth' that impact upon post-conflict society, visual methodology is therefore most appropriate.

Secondly, as discussed, CDA represents a social constructivist approach to analyzing material images, based on the assumption that social reality is constructed within specific contexts by encoding

meaning into the textured world (Doel, 2016). In contrast, the frequently represented counterpart of discourse analysis in the domain of visual methodology, known as content analysis, traditionally deploys a positivist perspective, based on “the idea of a fixed and objective reality” (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004, p. 16). According to Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20), this results in a primary “concern with being objective, systematic, and quantitative”, based on “the belief that the meaning of the text is constant and can be known precisely and consistently”. In addressing one of the fundamental differences between both methodologies, they therefore argue that while “content analysis focuses on the text abstracted from its contexts”, “discourse analysis focuses on the relation between text and context” (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 20). This understanding of discourse analysis corresponds with the literature on truth commissions, arguing that the ‘truth’ they aim to ‘seek’ is not “a single objective reality waiting to be discovered or found”, but rather a social construct shaped by choices, worldviews and context (Chapman & Ball, 2001). It can therefore be argued that applying CDA to the material images constructed by truth commission allows for the relevant examination of these constructed meanings and underlying views in their constitutive context, while the application of a positivist approach to content analysis would not.

Thirdly, as discussed in the literature review, truth commissions consciously shape and spread a new narrative on the past in sensitive and fragmented post-conflict contexts, which often yields contestation. Furthermore, within the field of truth commission discourses, specific representations concerning justice and reconciliation often dominate over and exclude other perspectives. The work and impact of truth commissions can therefore be seen as a, at times, controversial social issue, in which discourses and the use of language play an important role. As discussed, critical discourse analysis is characterized by its focus on this use of language in controversial social issues, revealing its constraining and exclusionary capacity. Especially in the Former Yugoslavia, where remembrance initiatives and narratives on the past represent a profoundly contested arena of social and political life, the exclusionary implications of ‘truth’ discourses must be considered. Furthermore, CDA’s critical approach not only allows the scholar to uncover exclusions and inequalities, but also identify possibilities for social change. In the context of the Yugoslav successor states, where institutions such as the ICTY and nationalistic NGOs arguably contribute to deepening divisions (SOURCE), it can be argued that CDA’s possibilities for change are especially relevant.

3.1.3 The analytical framework and methods

A useful analytical framework for a critical approach to discourse analysis is provided by Fairclough (2001a), consisting of the following five steps. First, a social issue must be selected, in which the use of language plays an important role. As discussed in the previous section, the construction of ‘truth’ by truth commissions represents such an issue. Second, one must “[i]dentify obstacles to it being tackled”, involving an analysis of the representations and/or practices that produce and reproduce the discourses (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 125). According to Fairclough (2001a), this step is by most referred to as the actual discourse analysis, or method, used to analyze the research units. Third, the consideration must be made “whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense ‘needs’ the problem” (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 125). This step revolves around the purpose of the discourse, and the examination of whether the social issue is created in the process of sustaining a specific social order (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 126). Fourth, the obstacles identified in step 2 must be considered to look for possible alternative approaches. Finally, the researcher must critically reflect on his or her analysis (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 125). It can be argued that these final three steps represent the critical nature of CDA, by critically reflecting on the results and methodological approach, which is why they will be addressed in the conclusion of this report.

Regarding step two, however, Fairclough (2001a, p. 125) argues that the actual discourse analysis can be approached in a variety of ways. The type of analysis selected in this step depends on

the research focus, objectives and available research units (Fairclough, 2001a). Based on these considerations, this section therefore discusses the selected methods.

3.1.3.1 Political discourse analysis

In focusing on narrative construction by truth commissions, corresponding with the focus of this study, Moon (2006) operationalizes Foucault's philosophical insights in the creation of a framework for political discourse analysis. She argues that since a truth commission's work represents a highly politicized project that is shaped and constrained by discourse, political discourse analysis is the methodological approach best suited to examine its "limits and exclusions" (Moon, 2006, p. 258). In translating Foucault's insights, she states that "discourse is constitutive of, and materialized through, social and political relations and identities which are embedded within, and emerge via, non-discursive practices such as institutions and policies" (Moon, 2006, p. 259). In drawing out this interplay between discourses and 'non-discursive practices', Moon (2006, p. 259) identifies Foucault's 'rules governing a discourse'. These rules, or components of a discourse, include:

- "1. The *objects* about which statements are made;
 2. The *enunciative modalities* or positions from which subjects speak;
 3. The *concepts* which govern discourse;
 4. The *strategies or theories* that flow from particular discursive formations."
- (Moon, 2006, p. 259)

In applying these rules to the discourse of the South African TRC, Moon (2006) clarifies what these components include. She states that, in relation to a truth commission's investigations, the 'objects' of the discourse can be seen as the investigated human rights crimes (Moon, 2006, p. 259). It is these human rights crimes about which statements concerning for instance the nature of the violence and responsibility are made (Moon, 2006). More generally, however, Rose (2012) argues that these 'objects' are the main topics of texts, around which all other elements of a text are organized to provide meaning. Important elements in providing this meaning are "the concepts which govern discourse" (Moon, 2006, p. 259). These 'concepts' can be identified in the 'field of statements' made about the objects of discourse, the organization of which is "constitutive of the 'reality' they claim to reflect" (Moon, 2006, p. 262). Laffey and Weldes (2004, p. 28), therefore refer to these objects and concepts as the "main signifying elements of the discourse", representing different 'social interest' and practices. By identifying the "[c]hains of connotation among these signifying elements", meaning the ways different elements are linked, one can examine how discourses "define what is real, true or possible" (Laffey & Weldes, 2004, p. 29).

Furthermore, Moon (2006) argues that it is also important to consider who is attributed with the authority to speak, representing the 'enunciative modalities' of a discourse. In the case of the TRC, Moon (2006, p. 261) argues that these subject positions or identities include for instance 'victims' and 'perpetrators', related to their modes of speaking such as 'testimony' during public hearings. According to Laffey and Weldes (2004, p. 29), attention to subject positions is 'crucial'. By examining the 'qualities' attached to them, the way in which subject positions contribute to "legitimizing the argument in which the identity participates" can be identified (Laffey & Weldes, 2004, p. 29).

Finally, Moon (2006, p. 265) states that the 'strategies' or 'theories' of a discourse are the product of the organization of these subject positions, objects and concepts, reflecting the assumptions and desired outcomes of the discourse. By examining "the range of objects to be known, the functions and positions of the knowing subject, and the material, technical, and instrumental investments of knowledge", one can therefore interpret what message a discourse wants to convey and what power relations dictate this message (Hook, 2001, p. 5). Only by identifying this constellation

of different components, will one be able to “investigate what work these texts do: how do they impact upon and affect society and space?” (Doel, 2016, p. 228). In short, this type of discourse analysis provides relevant analytical steps for this study, including identifying the signifying elements of the discourse and their corresponding statements, identifying the links between them, identifying the different subject positions in the discourse, and interpreting the strategies that flow from the combination of elements and subject positions.

3.1.3.2 Integrating content analysis in a discourse analytic framework

Although extremely valuable in unearthing the relations between the different components of a discourse and their discursive context, this type of discourse analysis is not suited to identifying the “frequency of particular [elements] or their patterns in the representations” (Laffey & Weldes, 2004, p. 30). According to Laffey and Weldes (2004, p. 29), this is the domain of content analysis, characterized by its focus “on patterns in documents, on identifying content units (words, themes, stories and the like) and their clustering”. Based on these characteristics, Gross et al. (2007, p. 8) therefore argue that content analysis is useful in providing an overview of the most visible elements in texts. According to Wilson (1993, p. 1), this is especially relevant when analyzing large volumes of texts. In addressing the benefits of content analysis, Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20) therefore argue that “content analysis can, through its focus on being systematic and quantitative, play a potentially useful role in expanding our understanding of the role of discourse in constructing the social”. It can therefore be argued that content analysis provides a useful addition to discourse analysis, by allowing the researcher to establish an overview of dominant elements and patterns in large volumes of texts before analyzing these elements more in-depth. When considering the large volume of research units available for this study, which will be discussed in section, the ability of content analysis to process large volumes of texts can be a useful tool. Furthermore, according to the literature, certain ‘truth’ discourses can sometimes dominate over others in the work of truth commissions, resulting in specific constructed ‘truths’. Content analysis can therefore be used to analyze the frequencies and patterns of elements belonging to these discourses, allowing identification of dominant discourses. Based on these considerations, this approach to integrating content analysis in discourse analysis is adopted as a relevant method for this study.

However, as discussed in section ‘3.1.2 Justification of methodology’, a traditional and positivist approach to content analysis does not suit the constructivist focus of this study. Based on these different epistemologies, most scholars therefore perceive content and discourse analysis to be fundamentally incompatible (Herrera & Braumoeller, 2004). In considering this epistemological dilemma, Hardy et al. (2004) provide a solution for the integration of both methods by using an alternative approach to content analysis. They argue that there are “[m]ore qualitative forms of content analysis that do not assume highly stable meanings of words but, rather, include a sensitivity to the usage of words and the context in which they are used”. In addressing this sensitivity, Wilson (1993, p. 1) states:

“A count of the word *good* in a text, for example, may be misleading: how many of these instances are negated and thus express the opposite of the concept ‘good’; how many are discursal interjections without any real content; moreover, to what or whom do the instances of *good* actually refer?”

Based on similar considerations, Hardy et al. (2004, p. 21) therefore argue that “[t]here is no way to separate meaning from context and any attempt to count must deal with the precarious nature of meaning”. By moving “from simple counting to more complex interpretation”, interpretive content

analysis can therefore be used to supplement the methodological framework of discourse analysis (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 20).

Based on the importance of interpretation, this integrated framework must comply with the “hallmark[s] of good research” regarding discourse analysis (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 20). According to Neuendorf (2004), while positivist content analysis is primarily concerned with the “reliability, validity, [and] generalizability” of the findings (p. 33), discourse analysis focusses on precise “description and identification by the observer” (p. 35). In other words, precise description is what Wodak (2001, p. 65) refers to as transparency of choices, meaning that the researcher has to document the steps or choices that lead to specific interpretations. According to Bryman (2012), transparency can be achieved by means of a coding scheme, incorporating analysis questions and justification of the codes used to answer these questions. As discussed, these codes are based on interpretation of the texts, meaning that they are not established prior to the analysis, but “emerge from the data” (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 21). Hardy et al. (2004, p. 21) add that “existing empirical research and theoretical work provide ideas for what to look for” when analyzing texts and establishing codes. This also relates to precise identification, or what Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20) refer to as “interpretive accuracy”. Interpretive accuracy can be achieved by basing interpretation on the “conceptual apparatus” (Laffey & Weldes, 2004, p. 28), meaning that the researcher must “justify theoretically why certain interpretations of discursive events seem more valid than others” (Wodak, 2001, p. 65). According to Hardy et al. (2004, p. 21), this approach differs from formal reliability and validity in the sense that “differences in interpretation are [not] problematic” and results do not assume to accurately reflect one reality. Instead, results must demonstrate “a plausible case that patterns in the meaning of texts are constitutive of reality” and are therefore “reliable to the degree that they are understandable and plausible to others” (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 21).

Furthermore, besides describing and justifying the analytical steps and interpretations, researchers focused on discourse analysis must also perform “reflexive examination” (Hardy et al., 2004, p. 20). According to Szczepanikova (2010), interpretation is context-bound, meaning that the knowledge, background, culture, time and place of the researcher shape her or his analysis. Hardy et al. (2004, p. 21) therefore argue that reflexivity in discourse analysis is “[n]ecessarily high”, incorporated in the analysis by reflecting on “the role that the author plays in making meaning”. In conclusion, Hardy et al. (2004, p. 20) state:

“Research is, from this perspective, an exercise in creative interpretation that seeks to show how reality is constructed through texts that embody discourses.”

Based on this perspective, this study is approached as an opportunity to be creative in the development of a framework for analyzing discourse, combining the relevant and useful characteristics of content and discourse analysis. This framework is created based on the assumption that this will lead to more profound insights, regarding the dominance of elements in RECOM’s conceptualization of ‘truth’ and their impact on society. Based on the discussed methods, the following steps are part of this analysis:

1. The interpretation and coding of signifying elements and subject positions is discussed in the final section of this chapter, as part of the coding scheme.
2. The coding of signifying elements will be used to provide an overview of these elements, indicating which elements are more dominant than others, which will be discussed in section ‘4. Results’.

3. This overview will be used to identify which elements require further examination in relation to their patterns of statements. This interpretation of dominant discursive formations will be related to the literature and discursive context, in order to justify the interpretations.
4. The corresponding strategies that flow from combining these different signifying elements and subject positions will be discussed in the conclusion, accompanied by a reflexive examination of the analytic process.
5. Furthermore, an overview of the present elements and subject positions will be used to determine what is absent from the discourse and what this means for the construction of possible alternative approaches.

First, however, the selection of research units used in this analysis is discussed.

3.2 The research units

3.2.1 The Coalition for RECOM and its discursive context

The birth of the Coalition for RECOM can be traced back to 2004, when three prominent documentation centers decided that a “regional approach to truth-telling” was necessary in order to deal with the violent past of the Former Yugoslavia (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110). By establishing the Initiative for RECOM in 2006, the Serbian Humanitarian Law Center, Croatian Documenta and Bosnian Research and Documentation Center aimed to help “victims as well as civil society at large to resist political manipulation of the past” (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110). The following two years were characterized by a “broad regional consultation process”, involving over a hundred local non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, culminating in the formal establishment of the Coalition for RECOM in 2008 (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110). Since then, the coalition has focused on attracting support from a broad range of actors for the formal establishment of RECOM, or the “[r]egional Commission tasked with reconstructing the facts about all victims of war crimes and other gross human rights violations committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 2001” (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110). According to Orlandi (2014), this process of advocating for support has revealed a myriad of challenges, regarding the truth-seeking context of the Former Yugoslavia.

3.2.1.1 *Competing narratives in the Former Yugoslavia*

According to Moll (2013, p. 912), the memory landscape of the former Yugoslavia is characterized by “[m]emory competition in line with the development of national identity politics”. In other words, to fulfill specific political purposes, nationalist politicians across the region “perpetuate their own version of the truth” about the recent violent past (Orlandi, 2014, p. 109). In examining these ‘truths’, Moll (2013) identifies the persistence of a dominant and common narrative pattern, combining the components of glorification, victimhood, blame and denial. This pattern includes “the glorification of one’s own battles and soldiers combined with a strong emphasis on one’s own victimhood, together with the spreading of blame and resentment against other national groups and a denial of the “dark sides” of one’s own history” (Moll, 2013, p. 914). Furthermore, these narratives not only characterize the political sphere, but have also resulted in increased fragmentation of societies in the region along ethno-national lines (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010).

According to Hoogenboom and Vieille (2010), reconciliation across the ethnic divide was theorized to be achieved by the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, countering competing narratives by means of “the individualization of guilt”. In reality, however, perpetrators are celebrated as heroes and war crimes are continuously denied in the wake of the international tribunal’s proceedings (Zupan, 2006). According to Zupan (2006, p. 337), “mutually

exclusive truths and notions of victimhood and heroism are still shaping the various group identities, thus reinforcing the existing social fragmentation". Selimovic (2015) argues that these narratives persist, since the proceedings and outcomes of the ICTY were manipulated by political elites to suit their nationalist propaganda. Along similar lines, Hoogenboom and Vieille (2010, p. 195) argue that "[t]he hopes of an irrefutable historical narrative were lost, due to the multiple interpretations according to each group".

In the case of Bosniak narratives, Moll (2013) argues that the concepts of 'aggression' and 'genocide' take center stage. The conflict is simultaneously represented as a war of aggression instigated by the other parties and as an act of genocide against Bosniaks, thereby validating sentiments of blame and victimhood (Moll, 2013). The Srebrenica genocide is adopted as a central symbol, representing the "suffering of the entire Bosniak nation" (Moll, 2013, p. 915). Within this context, ICTY cases against Serb and Croat nationals are interpreted as proof of this 'aggression' and are therefore assimilated into the narrative on Bosniak victimhood (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010). Simultaneously, court proceedings against Bosniaks are persistently met with denial (Moll, 2013). Alternatively, many Serbs and Croats perceive the ICTY to be "biased and incapable of providing fair trials" (Hoogenboom & Vieille, 2010, p. 191). Concerning Serb nationalist narratives, Moll (2013, p. 917) states that "[w]hen confronted with the evidence of crimes, the general attitude is to declare that crimes were committed on all sides, while at the same time complaining that Serb victims are ignored". Zupan (2006, p. 338) argues that since they represent the vast majority of indictees, the conviction of Serbian war criminals by the ICTY is seen as "victor's justice" in the eyes of many Serbs, reinforcing national solidarities and fragmentation between groups. Furthermore, both Serb and Croat nationalists aim to minimize the extent of violence committed by their respective forces (Moll, 2013), referred to by Ramet (2007, p. 41) as the 'denial syndrome'. Based on large-scale public opinion surveys conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia and Kosovo, Milanović (2016, p. 235) concludes that *"[t]he picture painted by the surveys is depressing: denialism and revisionism are not just alive and well in the former Yugoslavia—they are thriving"*.

Within this landscape of competing narratives, Orlandi (2014, p. 110) argues that the idea of RECOM "was rooted in the conviction that the ICTY somewhat failed to contribute its findings to the construction of a common and non-contradictory narrative of the past". Alternatively, RECOM was conceived to take on this task, since "[a]rguably, a narrative provided by the regional civil society would be more acceptable to the different ethnicities" (Zyberi, 2012, p. 11). However, according to Orlandi (2014, p. 110), the establishment of RECOM will require "the support of a large segment of the population [and] the approval of the political leadership". Ironically, the nationalist narratives that RECOM aims to diminish are also the reason why some politicians "have stubbornly opposed to the establishment of a truth commission" (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110). According to Orlandi (2014, p. 110), "the existence of incompatible narratives has allowed each ethnic group to claim for exclusive ownership over the truth", enabling "politicians to play the 'ethnic card' in order to deepen anger and hatred any time it was needed for political purposes". Rowen (2017, p. 71) argues that the Coalition for RECOM's efforts to navigate this contested terrain, while advocating for support, have resulted in an "ambitious set of goals", characterized by the desire to "meet the contradictory interests of different actors".

3.2.1.2 RECOM's ambitious goals and struggle to gain support

Regarding investigation of the past, RECOM aims to fulfill functions such as "[c]ollecting information on war crimes cases and other gross violations of human rights", "[c]ompiling registers of civilians and combatants whose loss of life or disappearance was caused by the war or other forms of armed conflict", and "[c]ollecting information on place of confinement" (Coalition for RECOM, 2017c). According to Rowen (2017, p. 71), these functions relate to the objective to "create a comprehensive historical record, which is an objective and realizable goal". However, Rowen (2017, p. 73) argues that

during the extensive consultation process, “Coalition leaders soon realized that the most important function of a truth commission would be to enable survivors to tell their stories”. This relates to another function expressed by the Coalition, concerning “[h]olding public hearings of victims and other persons” (Coalition for RECOM, 2017c). According to Rowen (2017, p. 73), this function was in part included in order to gain support from victims’ associations and other related CSO’s, since “[p]romising the chance to share their experiences in TC hearings was a way to engage individuals who might be skeptical of a truth commission”.

However, according to Rowen (2017, p. 73), one of the main ways in which the Coalition tries to satisfy conflicting interests is by not only focusing on investigating the past, but also setting goals that contribute to “changing social and political relationships for the future”. In addressing people’s “hopes for a better life”, the Coalition’s media campaign in part focused on the topic of European integration (Rowen, 2017, p. 73). Rowen (2017, p. 73) explains this focus by stating that “[i]n the Balkans, part of moving on and living better means EU membership, and many in the region, including political leaders, have tried to speed up this integration process”. She adds that this campaign was not only successful in attracting support from citizens, but also contributed to increased attention from the media, and attracting support from both international and local political bodies (Rowen, 2017). By 2011, the Coalition had “the support of the Montenegrin Parliament, the presidents of Serbia and Croatia, the European Commission, the Subcommittee for Human Rights of the European Parliament, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, the Serbian Parliamentary Committee for European Integration, and many individuals” (Zyberi, 2012, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, Rowen (2017, p. 70) states that diverse foreign donors backed the initiative, hoping “that their money would contribute to social, political, and economic stability in the region”. Among these donors, the EU made a “1,200,000 euro investment” in the Initiative for RECOM, and urged regional governments to back the establishment of the commission (Rowen, 2017, p. 70). Relating the establishment of RECOM to EU membership, the EU stated that “[i]t is only with war crimes tackled that the EU integration process will end successfully” (Rowen, 2017, p. 70).

During its campaign, however, the Coalition not only gained support, but also inspired criticism. According to Rowen (2017, p. 80), “it continued to struggle to get popular support in BiH, the key country”. She states that especially Bosniaks criticized RECOM as a mechanism “to equalize the crimes committed by Serbia” (Rowen, 2017, p. 80). Along similar lines, Orlandi (2014, p. 111) notes that the Coalition received “harsh critiques” from the media and civil society, arguing that RECOM “seems inadequate to investigate the wider context, causes and perpetrators of the war in former Yugoslavia”. A widespread critique is based on the view that “by overlooking the policy at the origin of such gross human rights violations and war crimes, the RECOM statute is virtually granting amnesty to the State, institutions and political as well as intellectual élites of Serbia” (Orlandi, 2014, p. 111). Rowen (2017, p. 75) therefore concludes that the Coalition’s campaign, “which was predicated on creating a truth commission that could meet the hopes and desires of so many different constituencies, may have undermined its proponents’ goals”.

Nonetheless, the Coalition for RECOM (2017c) states that its 2014 Draft Statute was jointly drafted and approved by the coalition *and* representatives of the presidents of the Yugoslav successor states. Due to the Coalition’s “clear understanding of the fact that not only popular but also institutional support is needed”, Orlandi (2014, p. 112) therefore argues that “the RECOM Initiative seems to be well-equipped to succeed”. After four more years of consultation, the Coalition for RECOM expressed the hope that the 2018 Western Balkan Summit, held in early July, would be the occasion where “a declaration signed by the Balkan states (initially by Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia, to be followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Croatia) [...] would initiate the formal process of its establishment” (Kostovicova, 2018). According to Kostovicova (2018), however, this did not happen due to continuing lack of political will to address the past and face accountability, leaving

civil society “to grapple with the question of how to press on with their cause”. It can therefore be argued that despite a decade of consultation, fervent advocacy, and negotiation, RECOM has not been established yet and still awaits approval by the governments of the Yugoslav successor states.

With the aid of *The Voice*, a publication first published in 2011 during the Coalition’s media campaign, this study aims to examine how the Coalition for RECOM developed and expressed its conception of ‘truth’ in this complex context of conflicting interests.

3.2.2 The Voice

In short, ‘*The Voice*’ is described as a monthly publication, created to inform both the coalition’s members and the general public on the initiative and its progress. It is distributed both in print and in electronic form on the coalition’s website, published in all main languages of the Yugoslav successor states as well as in English (Coalition for RECOM, 2017b). In the introduction of the first issue (2011a, p. 1), the editors state that the main task of *The Voice* is to answer questions like:

“What is RECOM’s goal? What is happening with the Initiative for RECOM? What do victims of serious human rights violations think of the Initiative?”

The article states that these questions will be answered by providing information about the Initiative and its “events and developments”, by disseminating “the voice of victims”, and by publishing “the opinions of prominent public figures, the media and the public about the Initiative for RECOM” (Coalition for RECOM, 2011a, p. 1). Furthermore, the publication also collects “opinion pieces, interviews and testimonies of those for whom responsibility, the need for truth, reconciliation and memory are social priorities” (Coalition for RECOM, 2011a, p. 1). In short, *The Voice* is envisioned to provide insight into the coalition’s progress and RECOM’s goal, supported by the views of a diversity of relevant actors.

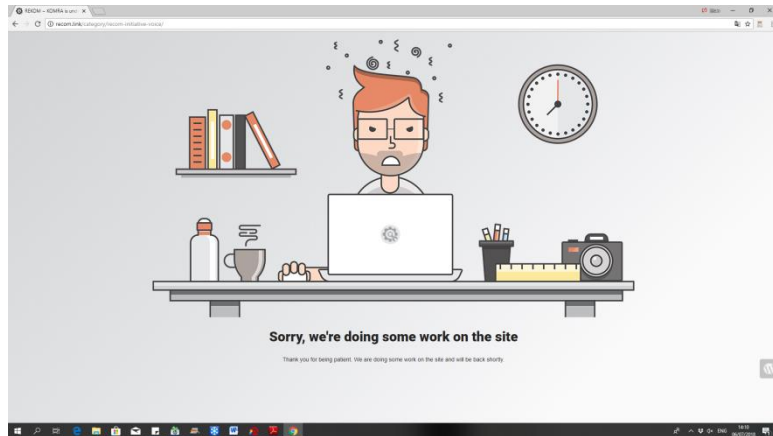
When relating this description of content to the objective of this research project, understanding RECOM’s conception of ‘truth’, the discussion of RECOM’s goal is most relevant. The introductory article concludes by describing this “ultimate goal” as “uncovering the facts and finding out the truth” (Coalition for RECOM, 2011a, p. 2). It can therefore be argued that, at least in part, *The Voice* is devoted to discussing ‘truth’ as a goal and providing the opinions of others on this subject. According to the literature, however, those who have the power to produce the discourse, or material images, determine what is included and what is excluded. In essence, even the published opinions of others therefore represent selections made by the editors of *The Voice*, members of the Coalition for RECOM, based on what they deem relevant. It can therefore be argued that *The Voice* is a valuable source of information regarding the coalition’s conception of ‘truth’, since it not only addresses RECOM’s ‘ultimate goal’ and corresponding objectives regarding ‘responsibility’, ‘reconciliation’ and ‘memory’, but also discusses these components more in-depth by providing selected opinions. This content suits the objective of this study, which aims to not only analyze the type of ‘truth’ that is constructed, but to also understand how and why this conception of ‘truth’ is created.

3.2.2.1 *The available research units*

As discussed, the issues of *The Voice* are available in English in electronic form on the website of the Coalition for RECOM, www.recom.link. However, during the data collection phase of this study, starting in the third week of June, the coalition’s website was inconveniently under construction (see Image 3.1). In order to prevent major delays in the completion of this project, Scribd (2018) was used to download the selection of issues available on this website. This has yielded a selection of 13 issues of *The Voice*, ranging from the first issue published in 2011 until the fourteenth issue published in

2013, with the exception of issue number 3. These 13 publications include a combined total of 168 articles, which vastly transcends the scope of this study. In order to keep this project manageable within the allotted timeframe of a Master's thesis, selections must therefore be made.

Image 3.1: "Sorry, we're doing some work on the site"



Source: *Coalition for RECOM*, 2018

3.2.2.2 The selection criteria

The Voice not only addresses RECOM's objectives and relevant opinions regarding 'truth' and related concepts, but also includes articles about a range of other topics. According to Crawford (2004, p. 23), in order to conduct a relevant analysis, "the analyst must make choices about the kind of discourse they will focus on and the boundaries of the discourse — both temporal and genre — that they will examine". Based on the literature and the focus of this study, the kind of discourse that will be examined is restorative justice discourse concerning the Former Yugoslavia. This leads to two criteria that guide the selection of research units. First, the research units must address restorative justice components as discussed in the literature. Articles addressing restorative justice concepts, practices and objectives, such as organizing public hearings, countering denial, and researching crimes, are therefore included in the selection. Articles focused on the practical aspects of the initiative, such as advocacy campaigns and award ceremonies, that do not provide insight in the coalition's assumptions regarding 'truth', are excluded from the analysis. This concerns articles such as 'IRECOM advertisement on Belgrade trams' (Coalition for RECOM, 2011b, p. 24), depicting a picture of a tram and a statement about "one of the leading advertising agencies working with public transport providers in Serbia". Furthermore, this criteria also excludes articles addressing retributive justice discourse, such as an article on criminal justice legislation in Croatia (Coalition for RECOM, 2012a, pp. 12-14). Second, the research units must concern the region of the Former Yugoslavia, since this is the territory about which claims regarding 'truth' are made. This includes articles about the situation in the region and the work of the Coalition for RECOM, as an initiative focused on this region. Articles focused on other areas are excluded from the analysis, including articles about developments in Brazil (Coalition for RECOM, 2012b, p. 22) and Cambodia (Coalition for RECOM, 2012c, p. 28).

These criteria yield a selection of 89 relevant articles, which is still too great a number to examine within the timeframe of this study. Based on proof-reading and -analyzing a number of articles, it is estimated that a total of approximately 50 research units can be coded and analyzed within a month. In making this selection, Crawford's statement about temporal choices is considered. By examining the different issues of The Voice, it becomes apparent that earlier issues are largely focused on the Coalition's aims and discussions about the relevance of RECOM's functions and objectives, as described in the introduction of this section. Later issues, however, increasingly focus on

specific social issues in specific contexts, such as problems regarding commemoration in Croatia and victims in Kosovo (Coalition for RECOM, 2012d). This implies that the development of RECOM's conceptualization of 'truth', negotiated during its consultation period, covered the earlier issues of the publication, while later issues branched out to focus on other more distantly related topics. Based on these considerations, the choice is made to analyze the early days, or first few publications, of *The Voice*. The first 50 articles in terms of date of publication, that meet the selection criteria, are therefore selected as research units (see Appendix 1.1: 'List of research units').

3.3 Operationalization

As discussed, the analysis of research units is guided by sub-questions and a corresponding code scheme, ensuring interpretive accuracy based on the conceptual apparatus. These codes, however, are not established in advance. The literature provides ideas for what to look for in the research units, depending on what questions are asked (Hardy et al., 2004). Based on the literature, this section therefore justifies the sub-questions and corresponding analysis questions that shape the code scheme. Furthermore, the analysis questions that require coding are discussed in relation to the codes found in the research units, based on the identified signifying elements of the discourse.

3.3.1 Sub-questions

According to the literature, the work of truth commissions incorporates the perspectives of different actors to differing degrees. The construction of 'truth' and its implications is therefore partly shaped by the backgrounds and roles of the commissioners, by whether the testimonies of victims and perpetrators are included, by whether the media are engaged, and by whether members of the general public are invited to contribute their perspective. This consideration matches an important step in discourse analysis regarding the identification of subject positions, meaning the analysis of roles or identities from which subjects speak and their implications for the discourse. This results in the following sub-question:

4. What subject positions are represented in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?

Furthermore, discourse analysis also focusses on identification of signifying elements. In the context of this study, signifying elements are elements that provide meaning to the concept of 'truth'. According to the literature, one way in which truth commissions shape 'truth' is by adopting a specific approach in the investigation of human rights crimes. The adopted level of inquiry can lead to a focus on micro-truth and/or macro-truth, with distinct implications regarding the represented nature of the violence and the impact on different actors. In aiming to understand the level on which 'truth' construction occurs or is intended to occur, the following sub-question is asked:

5. What level of inquiry regarding truth-seeking is addressed in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?

The level of inquiry, however, is not the only selection shaping 'truth'. According to the literature, truth commissions deploy a variety of practices and representations related to a broad range of assumptions and corresponding objectives. Some of these objectives contribute to 'impartial' truth-seeking, while others are primarily focused on healing and reconciliation. Although predominantly represented as complementary goals in contemporary transitional justice discourse, tensions between 'objective truth' and reconciliation can nevertheless impact a truth commission's work. The importance

attributed to different discourses, focused on individual healing, 'collective memory' and acknowledgement, may limit a commission's ability or desire to construct forensic 'truth'. These different discourses, however, can also be seen as different types of 'truth' that are constructed and therefore exist simultaneously. It can therefore be argued that, in order to understand a commission's conception of 'truth' and the corresponding process of narrative construction, the importance attributed to these different discourses must be analyzed. This leads to the final sub-question:

6. To what extent do different 'truth' discourses shape the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?

These three sub-questions guide the analysis and the creation of the code scheme.

3.3.2 Code scheme

This section discusses the extensive justification of the interpretive content analysis, explaining how different subject positions and signifying elements are identified, interpreted and correspondingly coded. This process has resulted in a number of analysis questions and corresponding codes for each sub-question. The interpretations shaping the discourse analysis, however, are discussed as part of the results in section 4. Throughout the analysis, including this section and the results chapter, references to the elements in the research units are accompanied by the number of the research unit.

3.3.2.1 Subject positions

Regarding the analysis of subject positions, Laffey and Weldes (2004, p. 29) argue that a 'crucial question' is "who speaks?". This not only concerns "which subject position authors the discourse", but also addresses which 'actors' and 'voices' are "privileged over others" (Laffey & Weldes, 2004, p. 29). When examining the research units, it becomes apparent that the 'voices' of subject positions are primarily expressed in two ways. Firstly, the authors of the articles are frequently identified by name and profession. This includes references such as "Tamara Opacic, journalist, H-alter" (23), and "Biljana Vankovska, Professor of the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje" (26). This implies that the Initiative for RECOM considers professional role to be a noteworthy representation of identity when it comes to its authors, and that this role provides meaning to the material image. This interpretation is supported by the literature, arguing that the different professional backgrounds of truth commission staffers, such as legal professional or social science scholar, have different implications regarding the construction of 'truth'. This leads to the following analysis question:

1. Who is the author of the research unit and what is her/his professional background?

The analysis indicates that, out of 50 articles, 7 articles are written by two authors. For the purpose counting and establishing the dominance of 'author' categories, this results in a total of 57 coded elements for 'author'. When the author's role or profession is not specified in the research unit, but the name of the author is provided, the Google search engine is used to investigate the author's professional background (see Appendix... for the data and sources used in this analysis). This analysis results in the following codes: 'Journalist/media', 'Scholar', 'NGO/CSO (member)', 'Artist', 'Religious leader', 'Legal professional' and 'Political actor (regional)'. These codes correspond with the categories found during the analysis of quoted subjects and are justified in the following section. Furthermore, the analysis also indicates that a number of the research units has no specified author. In these cases, when the author remains unnamed, the author is categorized as 'The Voice', since it is assumed that the article was written by one of the editors of The Voice (See Appendix for code tree).

Secondly, the examination of research units indicates that the 'voices' of subject positions are also frequently expressed by quoting (or paraphrasing) specific actors in the articles. The range of identities attributed to quoted actors, however, is substantially more diverse than the range of author identities. These subject positions not only include references to professional background, including scholars or politicians, but also to for instance 'victims' (8) and 'survivors' (27). This diversity of actors involved in the discursive process is supported by the literature, arguing that truth commissions are platforms for victims to tell their stories, for perpetrators to offer apologies, and for communities to share their perspectives. The attention paid to each of these roles, or identities, has implications regarding the construction of 'truth' and its reception in society. This leads to the following analysis question:

2. Are there any specific actors quoted or paraphrased in the research unit? And if so, what are their expressed roles or identities?

By examining the research units, it becomes apparent that most quoted actors are mentioned in relation to their professional role. This includes references such as "Ursa Raukar, an actress from Croatia", who is quoted in an article addressing the comments of "regionally renowned intellectuals and artists" (3). This implies that the author refers to the profession of 'actress' as 'artist'. Similarly, this article also refers to "Musician Dino Merlin" and "Slovenian director Dusan Jovanovic" (3). The code scheme of this study therefore categorizes creative professions, such as actress or actor, musician, film director and writer as 'Artist'. Along similar lines, another article addresses the views of "a number of non-governmental organizations" and "civil society organizations", quoting for instance "Zdenka Farkas, head of the Center "The Appeal"" and "Podgorica's Association of Families of the Kidnapped, Killed and Missing" (4). Such references to people or organizations are therefore categorized as 'NGO/CSO (member)'. Quoted actors referred to as for instance "The mayor of Vukovar" (12) or "Member of the EU Parliament" (21) are categorized as 'Regional political actor' and 'International political actor' respectively, referring to politicians and institutions from the Yugoslav successor states and to political actors from outside the region.

Other categories referring to professions are; 'Scholar', including references to 'researchers' or people employed by universities such as "Drazen Lalic (Faculty of Political Sciences, Zagreb)" (6) and "Law School Professor at the University of Sarajevo" (13); 'Journalist/media', including direct references to 'journalist' or 'media' such as "a journalist from Montenegro" (20) and "Slovenian media" (21); and 'Legal professional', including references to people in the legal profession or legal institutions such as "Chief Prosecutor of ICTY Serge Brammertz" (30). Finally, the category 'Other' includes subject positions that are only referred to in one or two articles, including "human rights defenders" (31), "retired Anglican archbishop" (10), "a member of RECOM's Coordination Council" (12); "a group of students" (5), and "Maribor's Branik Handball Club" (21), corresponding with 'human rights defender', 'Religious leader', 'RECOM member', 'Student', 'Professional (other)' respectively.

Finally, the analysis also indicates that a number of attributed identities do not refer to professional background. A number of articles are titled 'The Voice of Victims', providing testimonies by people who witnessed or experienced crimes. Since these people, such as "Smail Durakovic" (17), are referred to as 'victims' by the research units, this code scheme also categorizes these quoted actors as 'Victim'. Along similar lines, other articles quote actors referred to as "one of the three survivors of the massacre" (27), "a veteran from Croatia" (20), and names of people in the context of "a public gathering" (12), resulting in the categories 'Survivor', 'Veteran', and '(member of the) Public' (see Appendix... for the analysis leading to this code scheme).

3.3.2.2 *The level of inquiry*

Regarding the analysis of signifying elements that indicate a specific level of inquiry, the literature provides useful concepts pointing to what to look for in the research units. According to the literature, there are two general levels of inquiry adopted by truth commissions, shaping the type of results included in a commission's final report. These inquiries concern the micro-level, characterized by a focus on providing a detailed account of the violence, and the macro-level, focused on the broad impact of the conflict on a societal level. These different levels have distinct implications regarding the construction of 'truth', since the micro-level ultimately leads to the construction of micro-truth focused on individual experiences and individual responsibility for violations, while the macro-level can contribute to a macro-truth focused on broader patterns and assessments regarding wider forms of responsibility, such as the responsibility of those who maintained an abusive system. In order to examine the extent to which these different levels of inquiry are present in the discourse, the following analysis questions are used to guide the construction of the code scheme:

3. Which signifying elements point to results representing the micro-level of inquiry?
4. Which signifying elements point to results representing the macro-level of inquiry?

In aiming to analyze the types of results addressed by the Initiative for RECOM's discourse, a relevant point of departure is provided by the specified objectives and functions of RECOM. The first issue of *The Voice* lists the six general objectives and eight specific functions that the commission aims to fulfill (!*The Voice*, 1/2011, pp. 6-9). Some of these objectives do not indicate a specific level of inquiry and instead refer to the other dimensions of a truth commission's work, such as "to help create a culture of compassion and solidarity with victims" (!*The Voice*, 1/2011, p. 6). These objectives and functions will be discussed in the following section. The functions and objectives that do indicate a specific level of inquiry, however, point to both micro- and macro-truth.

Micro-truth

According to the literature, the micro-level is shaped by results concerning the details of specific events and individual crimes or cases. The relevance of these concepts derived from the literature, in the context of this study, is indicated by one of RECOM's expressed functions, described as "providing a detailed account of the crimes and other violations" (!*The Voice*, 1/2011, p. 8). This function expresses the intention to provide the details of violations, and can therefore be interpreted as an element in the discourse signifying a focus on the micro-level. The analysis of other research units reveals the presence of similar elements referring to approaching crimes or cases individually. These include signifying elements such as the statement that "*all cases* of proven crimes must be processed" (16), implying that each individual case 'must be processed', and the expressed need "to establish *individual* criminal responsibility for all crimes", meaning that the perpetrator of each crime must be determined (18). The code scheme therefore incorporates the code 'individual crimes or cases', used to code all elements that signify the intention or need to focus on crimes or cases in detail, as opposed to using data for generalizations or establishing patterns.

This focus on 'individual crimes or cases' is further specified by a number of other expressed functions. One function describes the aim to compile "registers of human losses", including both "civilians" and "combatants" (!*The Voice*, 1/2011, p. 8). This aim to create lists including those individuals who were killed during the wars, implies a focus on data concerning cases of deceased persons. Furthermore, another function is described as "[c]ollecting information on [...] individuals who were unlawfully confined, tortured or subjected to inhumane treatment" (!*The Voice*, 1/2011, pp. 8-9). These functions thus focus on providing information about individuals affected by different types of crimes, which can be interpreted as the intention to focus on the individual 'victims' of specific

crimes. Another category of 'victims' is represented by one of RECOM's general objectives, described as "[t]o help clarify the fate of the missing persons" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 7). This objective is further specified by one of the expressed functions, described as "[c]ollecting information pertaining to the fate of missing persons and cooperating with competent bodies of the Parties to the Agreement conducting the search for the missing" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8). Concretely, this 'search' is described as "the detection and discovery of secret mass graves" followed by the "exhumation and identification of the missing" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 7). These statements indicate that the commissions aims to find missing persons, which implies a focus on solving individual cases.

The analysis of other research units reveals the presence of similar elements referring to information regarding 'victims'. These signifying elements include for instance references to "official records of the killed and injured [...], which would include facts about the circumstances of suffering" (12), implying a focus on cases of victims and details of their suffering, and "that big book of the dead, which would contain the names of all those killed, persecuted or displaced since 1991" (7), referring to individual 'victims' by providing their names. Furthermore, more general references to 'victims' are also made, including statements such as "[w]e need to go from individual destiny to individual destiny, and find who the victims of war really were" (42), and "RECOM has a task to clarify the fates of all victims in the region" (48). Within the framework of this study, any references to investigating individuals or categories of 'victims', 'clarifying their fate', compiling lists of names or collecting information about the circumstance of suffering are therefore categorized as a focus on 'individual crimes or cases', contributing to the construction of a micro-truth.

Furthermore, the analysis of the research units indicates that 'individual crimes or cases' are not only referred to by expressing the intention to investigate, collect, compile or clarify. Signifying elements pointing to the micro-level of inquiry also include direct references to actual crimes or cases. These include statements regarding for instance "the massacre of more than forty Albanian women, children and men of the Berisha family in Suva Reka, on March 26, 1999" (27), or "genocide was committed in Srebrenica" (50). Furthermore, the research units also include testimonies referring to specific types of crimes, including statements such as "[t]hey had stuck an anti-aircraft bullet in her genitals and that woman was raped and killed so brutally" (47), or "they started beating me – I still suffer the consequences of it" (35). Within the framework of this study, any direct references to or descriptions of specific crimes or cases are therefore interpreted as referring to 'individual crimes or cases'.

According to the analysis of research units, however, specific crimes or cases are not the only elements signifying a focus on the micro-level. The research units also represent specific events, such as "the attack on Vukovar" (12), or "the siege of Sarajevo" (16). Furthermore, similar to references to investigating crimes, references to the intention to investigate events are also present in the texts. These include statements such as "that it [is] "necessary to clarify those events for which there is still not enough understanding" (49), and "[t]he need to research the events that marked the 20th century" (44). These elements correspond with the literature on micro-truth, stating that it includes a focus on providing an account of specific events. Within the framework of this study, any direct references to specific events, or references to the intention or need to investigate events are therefore coded as 'specific events'. It must be noted that these diverse signifying elements are all coded as either 'individual crimes or cases' or 'specific events' for the purpose of creating an overview of the dominant categories contributing to either micro- or macro-truth, as part of the content analysis. The distinct elements and their meaning, however, will be discussed in-depth in the results section as part of the discourse analysis.

Macro-truth

Alternatively, the literature indicates that the macro-level is comprised of results or information regarding causes and consequences of war, trends and patterns, legitimizations of violence and organizational structures. The relevance of a two of these concepts derived from the literature, in the context of this study, is indicated by one of RECOM's primary objectives, "[t]o establish [...] the political and societal circumstances that led to the commission of these acts, and the consequences of the crimes and human rights violations" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 6). This objective directly refers to the concept of 'consequences', while 'circumstances that led to the commission' of crimes can be interpreted as contributing factors, or 'causes'. The analysis of research units also reveals direct references to 'causes', such as "the causes of wars and war crimes" (9). Any references to 'consequences' and 'causes', or 'circumstances that led to' the violence, are therefore codes as 'Consequences' and 'Causes' respectively, contributing to a focus on macro-truth.

Furthermore, the research units also reveal elements referring to actual descriptions of represented causes and consequences. Regarding causes, these elements include statements such as "the armed conflict of 2001, which although a consequence of regional circumstances, broke out primarily because of the country's internal weaknesses and the inefficiency of its institutional mechanisms for early warning and prevention" (32). Representations of why the conflicts 'broke out', of what 'created' the wars, or of what made a 'contribution to' the conflicts, including elements with a similar meaning, are therefore interpreted as elements signifying 'Causes'. Along similar lines, descriptions of represented consequences are also present, including references to "the effects of that conflict" (11), and "the borders and divisions created by the violence of the 1990s" (45). Any references to 'the effects' of the wars or what was 'created by' the wars, including elements with a similar meaning, are therefore interpreted as elements signifying 'Consequences'.

Another component of macro-truth, as discussed by the literature, is addressed by the function "describing patterns of abuses" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8). The analysis of research units indicates that this category is primarily referred to by statements regarding "victim numbers" (1), including references to for instance "death-toll" (41). These references are interpreted as elements signifying a focus on patterns, since statistics contribute to a generalization of findings, as opposed to a detailed account of each individual finding. The research units also incorporate representations of other generalized findings concerning what happened during the wars, including statements such as "[i]n 1997, 1998 and 1999, many Albanians were arrested" (33). Any elements referring to statistics or other general findings concerning the crimes and events of the wars, that focus on broader patterns as opposed to individual crimes or events, are therefore categorized as 'Trends and Patterns'.

The final expressed function pertaining to the macro-level of inquiry is described as "[c]ollecting information on places of confinement connected to the war or other forms of armed conflict" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8). Since this function describes a particular aspect of where the armed forces undertook specific activities, it can be argued that it relates to organizational structures. Furthermore, the analysis of the research units indicates that a number of testimonies refer to detention facilities, including references to for instance "camps" (17), or "stronghold of the KLA terrorists" (35), and to organization of the armed forces, referring to for instance "the 1st Zagreb A Brigade, 4th Battalion, an active unit of the Guards" (47). These elements, signifying how and where the different parties to the conflict were organized, are therefore interpreted as 'Organizational structures' contributing to macro-truth.

Finally, the analysis of research units also reveals elements signifying 'Legitimizations of violence'. This is addressed by statements regarding for instance "the all-encompassing justification for the killing of people" (42), implying a focus on how the violence was justified or legitimized. Specific legitimizations are addressed by statements such as "we were only defending ourselves, only counterattacking from time to time" (42), and "today's ideological view of the crimes as "acts of

defense”” (6). Any references to how people or parties justify their role in the conflict are therefore categorized as ‘Legitimizations of violence’, contributing to the construction of macro-truth.

By means of the different categories discussed in this section, every signifying element referring to the level of inquiry regarding the past conflicts that is found in the research units can be categorized (see Appendix for analysis). The results regarding these elements, categorized as ‘Individual crimes or cases’, ‘Specific events’, ‘Causes’, ‘Consequences’, ‘Trends and Patterns’, ‘Organizational structure’ and ‘Legitimizations’, are discussed in section ‘4. Results’.

3.3.2.3 The 4 ‘truth’ discourses

Regarding the analysis of signifying elements that indicate the reproduction of different ‘truth’ discourses, the literature provides useful concepts pointing to what to look for in the research units. According to the literature, the specific objectives, practices and corresponding concepts deployed by truth commissions point to four distinct discourses, focused on the forensic, narrative, social and/or restorative dimensions of their work. By analyzing represented objectives, practices and related representations, the conceptualization of different types of ‘truth’ can be examined. This leads to the following analysis questions:

5. What objectives are represented that point to a ‘truth’ discourse (Forensic, Narrative, Social or Restorative)?
6. What practices are represented that point to a ‘truth’ discourse (Forensic, Narrative, Social or Restorative)?
7. What related concepts are represented that point to a ‘truth’ discourse (Forensic, Narrative, Social or Restorative)?

The interpretation of objectives, practices and related concepts found in the research units is discussed in this section, contributing to the code scheme for each of the four discourses.

Forensic discourse

According to the literature, Forensic discourse concerns ‘objective’ truth-seeking, focused on impartial research contributing to the construction of an authoritative record of past violence. A focus on objectivity is implied by one of RECOM’s expressed objectives, “[t]o establish the *facts* about war crimes and other gross violations of human rights” (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 6). According to Caldas and Neves (2012, p. 110), paraphrasing Robbins (1981), “value-free, *fact*-grounded, knowledge” is the definition of objectivity. This reference to ‘establishing facts’ is therefore interpreted as a representation of the aim to construct objective ‘truth’. As discussed, however, interpretive coding involves the interpretation of meaning, as opposed to the counting of specific words. A reference to the word ‘fact’ is therefore relevant in the context of this study when it concerns ‘facts’ about the violent past, or the objective to establish ‘facts’. It is not relevant, however, when the word ‘fact’ is used in a statement like: “Vladimir Petrovic singled out an interesting *fact* – that in the process of dealing with the past and in the field of transitional justice there are virtually no historians” (6). In this context, it can be argued that the word ‘fact’ is used as a stylistic tool to support the strength of the speaker’s argument, meaning that it does not signify RECOM’s conceptualization of ‘truth’ about the past. In the context of this study, only references to ‘facts’ about the past conflicts are therefore coded as the Forensic objective ‘Establishing facts’.

Along similar lines, one research unit refers to RECOM as “an extra-judicial mechanisms designed to compile a record of the past based on facts” (1). According to the literature, the

compilation of a record of past violence is one of the main objectives related to Forensic 'truth', since it represents the aim to construct an "authoritative account of a specific period or regime" and document the past for future generations (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 3). The identified elements similarly pointing to this record include references to for instance RECOM's expressed function of "[c]ompiling [...] its Final Report" (4), the statement that "crimes [...] are being recorded" (5), and the importance of "detailed documentation" (6). The code scheme therefore codes all signifying elements referring to reporting, documenting and recording the past as the Forensic objective 'Record of the past'.

Furthermore, Forensic discourse also points to specific practices representing the investigation of the past. A number of RECOM's expressed functions point to these practices, describes as "[c]ollecting information on war crimes and other gross violations of human rights", "[c]ollecting information pertaining to the fate of missing persons", and "[c]ollecting information on places of confinement" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8). These functions all refer to 'collecting information', which can be interpreted as a practice indicative of data collection during the course of research. Another function directly refers to research, specified as "[r]esearching the political and societal circumstances that decisively contributed to the outbreak of wars" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 9). Similarly, another research unit refers to "genuine investigation" (14) as a synonym for 'research'. Since the literature indicates that Forensic discourse is focused on impartial research, any references to collecting, researching or investigating data concerning the past are coded as 'General references to researching', categorized as a Forensic practice.

More specifically, the research units also contain elements representing distinct practices. One article addresses the fate of missing persons and refers to the "discovery of secret mass graves" (4), followed by "exhumation and identification of the missing" (4). According to the literature, these practices contribute to the concept of 'Forensic truth', since they represent the actual practice of forensic investigation. Any references to finding mass graves and exhuming and identifying remains are therefore codes as the Forensic practice 'Discovery, Exhumation and Identification'. A final Forensic practice is referred to as "historical research" (37), or "historiographic work" (46), corresponding with the literature on researching historical sources as part of constructing Forensic 'truth'. Any references to this practice are coded as 'Historical research'.

Finally, a number of research units refer to concepts that signify data used in research. These concepts are represented in statements regarding for instance the "opening of all archives and the creation of a single database of missing persons" (4), discussed in the context of investigating the fate of the missing. According to the literature, consulting archives is one of the methods frequently used in 'impartial' research concerning the past. Furthermore, references to a database imply the processing of data, which can be interpreted as a step in the research process. Finally, data about the past are also referred to by statements such as "specific and precise information about the circumstances of their disappearance" (4), similarly used in the context of investigating missing persons. Elements referring to 'Archive', 'Database' or 'Information' regarding the past are therefore correspondingly coded as Forensic concepts.

In short, the discussed signifying elements all refer to Forensic discourse due to their focus on the 'objective' dimension of truth-seeking, as opposed to the more subjective dimensions focused on individual experience, public dialogue and restorative practices.

Narrative discourse

According to the literature, Narrative discourse concerns one of these subjective dimension of truth commission proceedings, focused on the recollection of individual experiences represented as truth-telling. The Narrative practice of 'Truth-telling' is directly referred to by statements concerning for instance "other initiatives [...] addressing reconciliation and truth-telling" (40). Furthermore, according

to the literature, truth-telling can be defined as disclosing personal accounts of past violence or providing individual testimony. The research units indicate that these individual narratives on the past are referred to as “testimonies” (33), “personal stories” (6), “witness statement” (27), and “life narratives” (17). Since these elements all refer to providing an individual account of past violence, they are coded as the Narrative practice of providing ‘Testimony’, which is the most commonly used term. Along similar lines, other research units refer to ‘the voice of victims’, an expression which is used in statements such as “[w]e cannot live a lie, one must hear the voice of victims” (7), but which is also used as a title for articles reproducing victims’ testimonies. It is therefore interpreted as an element signifying truth-telling, but it is coded separately as ‘The voice of..’ since it appears to be a dominant representation. Finally, truth-telling is also indirectly addressed by describing RECOM as “a platform for the victims” (1). This implies the creation of a space or stage for telling individual stories, which is supported by the literature as a component of Narrative ‘truth’. Similar signifying elements are therefore coded as the Narrative practice of providing a ‘Platform for victims’.

According to the literature, this practice of sharing individual stories is theorized to contribute to the objectives of catharsis and individual healing, representing the Narrative dimension due to their focus on the recovery of individuals. The analysis of research units indicates that these concepts are directly addressed in statements regarding for instance “self-healing” (23), and “[t]rauma instead of catharsis” (34). According to the literature, these objectives are dominant representations in truth commission discourses, and are therefore correspondingly coded as the Narrative objectives of ‘Individual healing’ and ‘Catharsis’. Furthermore, the research units indicate that healing is also addressed by elements with a similar meaning in the context of individual experiences, including “recovery” (16), and “moving on” (16). These concepts are therefore correspondingly coded as the Narrative objectives of ‘Recovery’ and ‘Moving on’. Finally, the literature indicate that truth-telling is not only related to healing, but is also theorized to contribute to the objective of remembrance. Remembrance concerns preserving the memory of the past, and is part of Narrative discourse due to its relation to the concept of individual memory. The research units indicate that this objective is addressed by statements concerning “remembering” the past (5), and “remembrance” (42). Within the framework of this study, similar elements are therefore coded as the Narrative objective of ‘Remembrance’.

Finally, Narrative discourse is also addressed in the research units by a number of concepts related to individual experience, which according to the literature is one of the characteristics of Narrative ‘truth’. Firstly, individual experience is directly addressed in statements such as “I know this from my own experience” (16), and “we still have the strength and courage to fight our own difficult experiences” (6). Similar element are therefore coded as the Narrative concept of ‘Experience’. Furthermore, the research units also represent as specific type of experience related to the conflicts, and a consequence of this experience, expressed by the statement that “when he heard that others had had similar experiences of suffering, he could share with them his pain and his feelings” (12). This statement implies that ‘suffering’ is an individual experience and that this experience resulted in certain feelings or emotions. The research units indicate that ‘suffering’ is a recurring element, which is why it is directly coded as the Narrative concept of ‘Suffering’. Furthermore, according to the literature, processing feelings concerning past traumatic events by means of truth-telling is theorized to contribute to individual healing, but certain case studies indicate that it can also result in increasing negative emotions. Emotions or feelings are therefore directly related to the Narrative dimension of truth-telling and healing. These concepts are addressed by statements such as “[t]ruth is painful” (16), and “moments of heart-rending grief” (41). Similar references to specific emotions are therefore coded as the Narrative concept of ‘Emotion’. The final two concepts found in the research units that relate to individual experience are memory and trauma. These concepts are used in statements regarding for instance “people who have been traumatized by war” (14), “dealing with past trauma” (44), and “he

shared with participants his memories of the days that forever changed his life” (17). These concepts are thus related to what people experienced during the conflicts. Furthermore, according to the literature, both ‘memory’ and ‘trauma’ are dominant representations in Narrative discourse, derived from Western memory culture focused on remembrance and dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Similar references are therefore respectively coded as the Narrative concepts of ‘Trauma’ and ‘Memory’.

In short, the discussed signifying elements all refer to Narrative discourse due to their focus on objectives, practices and concepts related to the war experiences of individuals.

Social discourse

According to the literature, the Social dimension of a truth commission’s work is concerned with engaging the public in its proceedings. This matches the two functions expressed by the Initiative for RECOM, including “[h]olding public hearings of victims and other persons about war crimes and gross violations of human rights” and “publishing, and presenting its Final Report in a manner that will facilitate broad access to the Report” (The Voice, 1/2011, p. 9). The research units reveal a number of references to public hearings, including references to “public testimony” (5), and “hear “personal stories”” (6). The literature indicates that hearing stories of violence told by victims is theorized to reach a number of social objectives, which is why all references to the public nature of testifying or ‘hearing’ testimonies are coded as the Social practice of ‘Public hearings’. Along similar lines, outreach concerning a commission’s findings is theorized to engage the public by keeping them informed, either directly or through other media. The research units reveal references to this practice in the form of statements regarding for instance establishing “legitimacy within local communities through public outreach activities” (45), “publication [...] of facts” (1), “public disclosure of facts” (15), and the importance of “good media coverage” (46). Any similar references to communicating with the public about the commission’s work or findings are therefore coded as the Social practice of ‘Outreach’.

The research units, however, also reveal other elements signifying social practices. One step beyond informing the public, or disclosing the facts, is represented as “mechanisms which will help integrate the established facts into the educational system” (6). Similar references are therefore coded as the Social practice of ‘Education’. Furthermore, the research units also include statements concerning for instance “broader public debate about war crimes” (1), “public statements about the truth” (6), “the space for discussions” (12), “public discourse” (26), and “improve social dialogue” (44). These elements all signify talking about the past in the public sphere, which according to the literature contributes to healing “communities by fostering dialogue” (Orlandi, 2014, p. 107). All elements signifying public discussion or talking about the past are therefore coded as the Social practice of ‘Dialogue’. Finally, the literature also indicates that some commission not only aim to inform and educate the public or inspire debate, but actively engage the perspectives of members of the public in the commission’s proceedings by means of participation. This practice is addressed in the research units by statements concerning a “public gathering” on dealing with the past (12), “citizens’ participation” (41), and incorporating “the opinions of [...] the public about the Initiative for RECOM” (1). Any elements signifying contributions by members of the public to RECOM’s work are therefore coded as the Social practice of ‘Participation’.

These different practices focused on engaging the public are theorized to contribute to a range of objectives. One of these objectives expressed by the Initiative for RECOM is “to help create a culture of compassion and solidarity with victims”. According to the literature, inspiring ‘compassionate listening’ and empathy, representing the public reaction to hearing stories of violence, is one of the outcomes of organizing public hearings. Both ‘Compassion’ and ‘Solidarity’, representing the relationship between people in society, are therefore coded as Social objectives. Furthermore, social practices like dialogue are also theorized to improve relationships based on other values, including

openness and mutual understanding. Regarding these relationships between people or societies, the research units reveal elements concerning “appreciation of openness and respect” (7), and “the promotion of shared values” (44), resulting in the corresponding codes ‘Openness’, ‘Respect’ and ‘Shared values’ as Social objectives. Finally, the literature indicates that mutual understanding concerns “getting to know the other” (Andrews, 2003, p. 46). This is addressed by the research units in statements such as “gain insight into other people’s feelings” (6), and “reversal of roles as a route to understanding” (11). Any similar references to understanding others, be it people, groups or nations, are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Mutual understanding’.

Finally, Social practices are also theorized to impact the public’s perspective on the past. This is addressed by one of RECOM’s expressed objectives, described as “[t]o help political elites and society [...] to accept the facts about war crimes and other gross violations of human rights” (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 6). According to the literature, this objective is in part related to public hearings, since the intimacy of personal stories about the past is theorized to provide authenticity to the narrative, which is needed to reach acceptance among the audience. References to accepting facts are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Acceptance of facts’. The literature also relates acceptance of the narrative to the public legitimacy of the commission, which is expressed in statements concerning for instance “public confidence” (6), “public [...] legitimacy” (12), and “trust” (31) concerning transitional justice mechanisms. Similar elements are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Public legitimacy’. Other objectives related to the impact of public hearings are expressed by the statement that “public testimony [...] would have a positive effect because it would create a strong emotional reaction, which would effectively make the audience aware of the sheer horror of the crimes” (5). This statement addressed ‘Emotional reaction’ to testimonies on crimes as a result of hearings, which is why it is correspondingly coded as a Social objective. Furthermore, the statement also addressed the objective of awareness, which is related to statements concerning focusing “public attention” on the past (12), and the aim “to raise awareness” (20). Elements with a similar meaning are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Awareness’.

The research units also reveal another objective that can be achieved after awareness and acceptance of facts are achieved, which is defined as “psychological reversal” (42). This process is described as reversing the “emotionally underpinned nationalistic – or patriotic – psychological blockade in place” (42), characterized by the view that “our people are right” (42). This objective is addressed by other statements concerning recognizing “our own sins” (23), “our own mistakes” (23), or “coming to terms with one’s own responsibility” (36). Similar elements referring to reflecting on one’s own side are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Psychological reversal’. Finally, all these different social practices and objectives are theorized to contribute to the construction of a ‘collective memory’, which can be defined as a collectively constructed grand narrative on the past (Andrews, 2003). The research units address this public narrative by for instance referring to a “universally accepted version of events” (6), “a common narrative” (29), “achieving consensus on the key facts” (29), and “calling on citizens to not only examine, but to collectively establish, a shared narrative of the past” (45). Any references to the shared nature of the narrative, as opposed to an individual narrative or authoritative record, are therefore coded as the Social objective of ‘Collective memory’.

In short, the discussed signifying elements all refer to Social discourse due to their focus on objectives and practices related to engaging the public, or the general population, as opposed to specific individuals and their experiences.

Restorative discourse

Regarding Restorative discourse, the Initiative for RECOM expresses the objective “[t]o acknowledge injustices inflicted upon victims” (!The Voice, 1/2011, pp. 6-7). According to the literature, restoring the dignity of victims by means of providing acknowledgement is the main political objectives of most

truth commissions, reflecting a focus on Restorative discourse. The practice of acknowledgement and related elements are addressed by the following statement:

“The victim or survivor finds peace only when their pain and suffering are publicly [...] recognized, when the victim’s dignity is restored either by compensation from the perpetrator (the right to reparation), or with an apology, which is also known as symbolic reparation.” (14)

Firstly, this statement represents recognition as a synonym for acknowledgement, which is also used in other research units. Any elements referring to recognizing or acknowledging victims are therefore coded as the Restorative practice of ‘Acknowledgement’. Secondly, the statement addresses ‘victim’s dignity’, which is supported by the literature as one of the main Restorative objectives of truth commissions, and is therefore correspondingly coded as ‘Restoring victims’ dignity’. Thirdly, the statement addresses ‘reparation’ or ‘compensation’, which is addressed by the literature as a specific way of acknowledging victims by means of providing redress. The research units reveal references to this practice by statements concerning for instance “funds to support the families of missing persons” (4), “providing redress to victims” (6), “payment of compensation” (20), and “realization of the rights of war victims and their families to reparation” (29). Any elements signifying a similar meaning are therefore coded as the Restorative practice of ‘Reparations’. Finally, the statement addresses ‘apology’, which is supported by the literature as an interaction between victims and perpetrators that provides acknowledgement to victims. References to ‘Apology’, or apologizing, are therefore correspondingly coded as a Restorative practice.

Furthermore, the research units also reveal the representation of another type of acknowledgement, described as “[r]ecognition of [...] responsibility” (6), which is correspondingly coded as the Restorative practice of ‘Recognition of responsibility’. Similar to apology, another research unit addressed the more religious concept of ‘Repentance’, represented in the statement that “we too have reason to repent” (24), which is correspondingly coded as a Restorative practice. Along similar lines, this research unit also states that “we need to ask forgiveness for the wrongs we ourselves have done” (24). This representation of ‘Forgiveness’ is discussed in the literature as religious concept that was especially dominant in the proceedings of the South African TRC, staging scenes of apology and forgiveness between victims and perpetrators. References to similar elements are therefore coded as the Restorative practice of ‘Forgiveness’.

According to the literature, however, restorative discourse is not purely focused on acknowledging victims, but also concerns restoring society as a whole, which is frequently represented as reconciliation. This is addressed by one of RECOM’s expressed objectives, described as “[t]o help prevent the recurrence of war crimes and other gross violations of human rights” (!The Voice, 1/2011, pp. 6-7). According to the literature, non-recurrence is a narrow conception of reconciliation, which is why it is correspondingly coded as the Restorative objective of ‘Non-recurrence of violence’. The research units, however, also frequently refer to the specific objective of ‘Reconciliation’, which is correspondingly coded as a Restorative objective. These objectives are part of what the literature describes as the ‘imagined future’, including representations of the type of future a truth commission aspires to by constructing a specific narrative on the past. The research units reveal a number of representations that point to a specific ‘imagined future’. Firstly, the future is directly addressed by statements such as “a shared and peaceful future” (14), “a successful future” (28), and “[b]elieving in a bright future (once the country joins the [...] the EU)” (26). Elements that attribute specific characteristics to the future are therefore coded as the Restorative objective of ‘Imagined future (label)’. Furthermore, the last statement also points to a specific imagined future, represented as ‘joining the EU’. This objective is addressed by a number of statements, including references to “the process of European integration” (2), “membership of the European Union” (2), and “accession to the

EU" (11). Similar references are therefore coded as the Restorative objective of 'European integration'. Along similar lines, another research unit addresses the imagined future by referring to "everything that comes later: reconciliation and cooperation, building new and better relations among the peoples and nations in our region" (1). This statements addresses two objectives, besides reconciliation, including 'cooperation' and 'better relations'. Both are addressed by a number of statements, including "[s]trengthening regional cooperation" (2), "the importance of regional cooperation and good neighborly relations" (2), and "the relationships between their societies and others" (18). Similar references are therefore respectively coded as the Restorative objectives of 'Regional cooperation' and 'Good relations'. Finally, a number of other concepts are sometimes used in relation to future objectives, including "Christian Unity" (24), "building trust" (50), "social integration" (9), and "heal the wounds" (49), which are correspondingly coded as expressions representing Restorative objectives.

Finally, the literature indicates that Restorative discourse often involves the construction of 'myths' about the past, described as a 'useable past', in order to legitimize future objectives. These myths are defined as narratives that often compete with Forensic 'truth', and may for instance represent a past of peaceful co-existence (Basu, 2008), or highlight a 'continuity' of violence in order to legitimize the need for reconciliation (Moon, 2006). The research units indicate that while some statements concern the need to "finally break the chain of violence" (11), or "break the cycle that every now and again leads to new conflicts" (11), others highlight "the long tradition of coexistence". Similar elements concerning the past before the conflicts broke out are therefore correspondingly coded as either 'Cycle of Violence' or 'Harmonious coexistence'. Furthermore, the research units also attribute certain subjective labels to describe the nature of the conflicts, including references to "the horrors of our common recent past" (1), "the sheer horror of the crimes" (5), and "our last collective descent into barbarism" (18). Similar labels attributed to the conflicts are therefore coded as 'Barbarism/horror'.

In short, the discussed signifying elements all refer to Restorative discourse due to their focus on the imagined future, by representing a 'useable past', restoring the dignity of victims, or representing the type of future they aim to achieve.

4 Results

This section discusses the results of the analysis for each of the three sub-questions, by providing a general overview based on the interpretive content analysis, followed by an in-depth analysis of the most dominant signifying elements.

4.1 The subject positions

As discussed in section '3.2.2 The Voice', the introductory article of the first issue states that The Voice disseminates the "voice of victims" and the opinions "of those for whom responsibility, the need for truth, reconciliation and memory are social priorities" (1). In order to examine the different subject positions that provide these opinions, and analyze which subjects shape the discourse, this section answers the following sub-question:

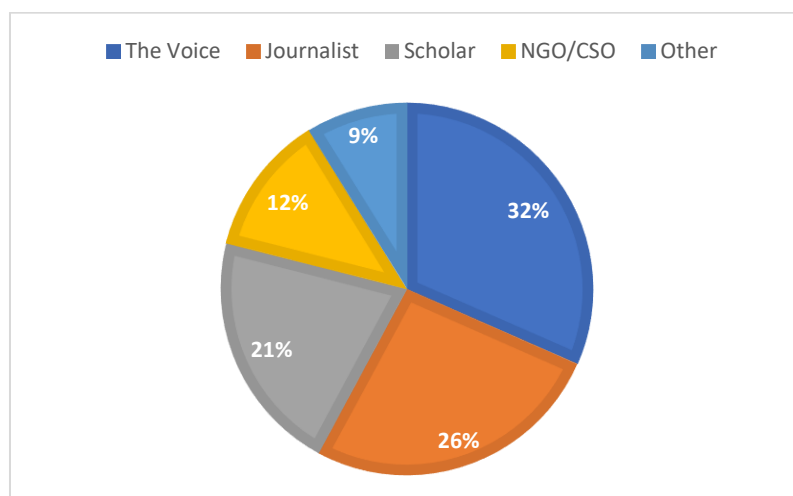
'What subject positions are represented in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?'

This question will be answered by discussing the authors and quoted actors of the research units (see Appendix 2.1.1 for an overview of the results).

4.1.1 The authors

The analysis indicates that almost one third of the 'author' codes fall within the category 'The Voice', followed by 'Journalist' with over one quarter of the codes and 'Scholar' with over one fifth of the codes (see figure 4.1). Finally, almost one eighth of the 'author' codes fall within the category 'NGO/CSO member', followed by 'Other' (see figure 4.1). The category 'Other' is comprised of author codes that occur once or twice in the research units, including 'Artist', 'Religious leader', 'Legal professional' and 'Political actor (regional)' (see Appendix 2.1.2). It can therefore be argued that, while the largest portion of research units is written by unnamed authors of The Voice, the analyzed articles with a specified author are predominantly written by journalists, closely followed by scholars. A less substantial portion of the articles is written by NGO or CSO members, followed by a number of other actors. Based on these findings, it can be argued that although the Initiative for RECOM's discourse is shaped by people with a diversity of professional backgrounds, reflecting the diverse interests that shape the Coalition for RECOM's discursive context, only three distinct subject positions stand out. The implications of these backgrounds are discussed in the following sections.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of 'author' codes per category (%)



4.1.1.1 Journalists

Upon closer inspection of the category 'Journalists', it becomes apparent that the authors in this category are primarily journalists from the Yugoslav successor states with ties to the Coalition for RECOM. While some articles were reproduced from other media, including the German 'Deutsche Welle' (11) and 'Neue Kärntner Tageszeitung' (11), and the regional 'Danas.net' (7) and 'Juntanji list' (7), or written by journalists unattached to the initiative (34 & 40), most articles in this category were written by RECOM advocates. These authors include Igor Mekina from Slovenia (1, 10, 39 & 46), Dragoljub Dusko Vukovic from Montenegro (15 & 18), Dinko Gruhonjic from Serbia (25 & 28), and Tamara Opacic from Croatia (23). These journalists are all listed as RECOM advocates, or members of the Coalition for RECOM (Coalition for RECOM, 2018a).

Based on these results, it can be argued that journalists, tied to the Coalition by membership, make an important contribution to the Initiative for RECOM's discourse. This is not surprising, since The Voice publishes articles on the progress of the initiative and other developments in the realm of transitional justice, meaning that it falls within the domain of journalism. Furthermore, according to the literature, the media, including individual journalists, can play an important role in the outreach activities of truth commissions. By engaging the media, commissions can inspire public debate, thereby contributing to the construction of social 'truth'. Based on the literature, it can therefore be argued that the involvement of journalists with the Initiative for RECOM reflects a dedication to outreach and represents an opportunity to effectively disseminate RECOM's findings in the future. Especially since the examination of the discursive context indicates that segments of the media have been critical towards the initiative in the past, it would make sense if the coalition has attracted pro-RECOM journalists to counter these critiques and advocate for RECOM.

4.1.1.2 Scholars

Regarding the category 'scholars', the analysis indicates that the authors in this category predominantly have ties to the Coalition for RECOM and that Philosophy is the most common discipline. Authors meeting this description are Biljana Vankovska (26 & 41), Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, Oliver Stanoeski (32), lecturer at the Institute for Security, Defense and Peace at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, Žarko Puhovski (42), Professor at the Philosophy Faculty in Zagreb, Nora Ahmetaj (14), with a Master's degree in Philosophy, and Gergana Tzvetkova (44), with a Doctorate degree in Philosophy. All these authors are members of the Coalition for RECOM (Coalition

for RECOM, 2018a). Regarding profession, however, Nora Ahmetaj is founder and senior researcher at the Center for Researching, Documenting and Publishing (CRDP) in Kosovo, and Gergana Tzvetkova is employed at the Center for the Study of Democracy in Sophia. Other authors include Jelena Grujić (31, 49 & 50), who is a researcher focused on human rights and currently an editor of RECOM.link. Only three scholars are not directly tied to the Coalition, including Alex Jeffrey (45), a human geographer at the University of Cambridge, Michaelina Jakala (45), a human geographer at Newcastle University (45), and Srdja Pavlovic (15), a modern European and Balkan history professor at the University of Alberta.

When considering the literature on truth commissions, the dominance of philosophy scholars is remarkable. According to the literature, truth commission staffers frequently have legal or social science backgrounds focused on empirical research. The involvement of human geographers and a historian therefore makes sense, considering their assumed expertise regarding social science research related to space or territory, and historical analysis, respectively. Similarly, the contributions of authors attached to research institutes or specialized in research concerning human rights are unsurprising. The selection of these authors, with research-related backgrounds, by the Initiative for RECOM implies a focus on the investigation of past violence, guided by the standards of impartial research. Alternatively, contributions by philosophers point to a more theoretical perspective, as opposed to a focus on empirical research. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2018), interest in truth commissions from a philosophical perspective is largely based on theory about “reconciliation as a moral and political value”. This implies that the incorporation of philosophical perspectives in the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse points to a theoretical discussion about the value of reconciliation. This is supported by the discursive context in which these issues of *The Voice* were produced, partly shaped by the Coalition for RECOM’s consultation period focused on discussing and establishing its objectives and functions regarding truth and reconciliation.

Furthermore, in general, it can be argued that the subject positions of authors referred to as scholars or researchers represent an ‘objective’ and authoritative perspective. According to the literature, a focus on impartial research is theorized to contribute to the construction of an authoritative record on the past, characterized by the aim to be ‘objective’. The role of scholars or researchers therefore implies a level of expertise or knowledge, which provides authority and ‘objectivity’ to the material image. Based on this interpretation, it can be argued that the dominance of this subject position is most likely intended to provide a level of authority and objectivity, implying truthfulness, to the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse.

4.1.1.3 NGO/CSO members

Regarding the category ‘NGO/CSO member’, the analysis indicates that these authors are primarily from one organization, the Humanitarian Law Center. Predrag Ivanovic (1), HLC’s founder Nataša Kandić (9 & 36), and executive director Bekim Blakaj (33) have all contributed articles to *The Voice*. Other authors include Edina Đurković (29), Director of the association Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and David van Reybrouck (37) and Peter Vermeersch (37), president and coordinator for European affairs at PEN Vlaanderen, respectively.

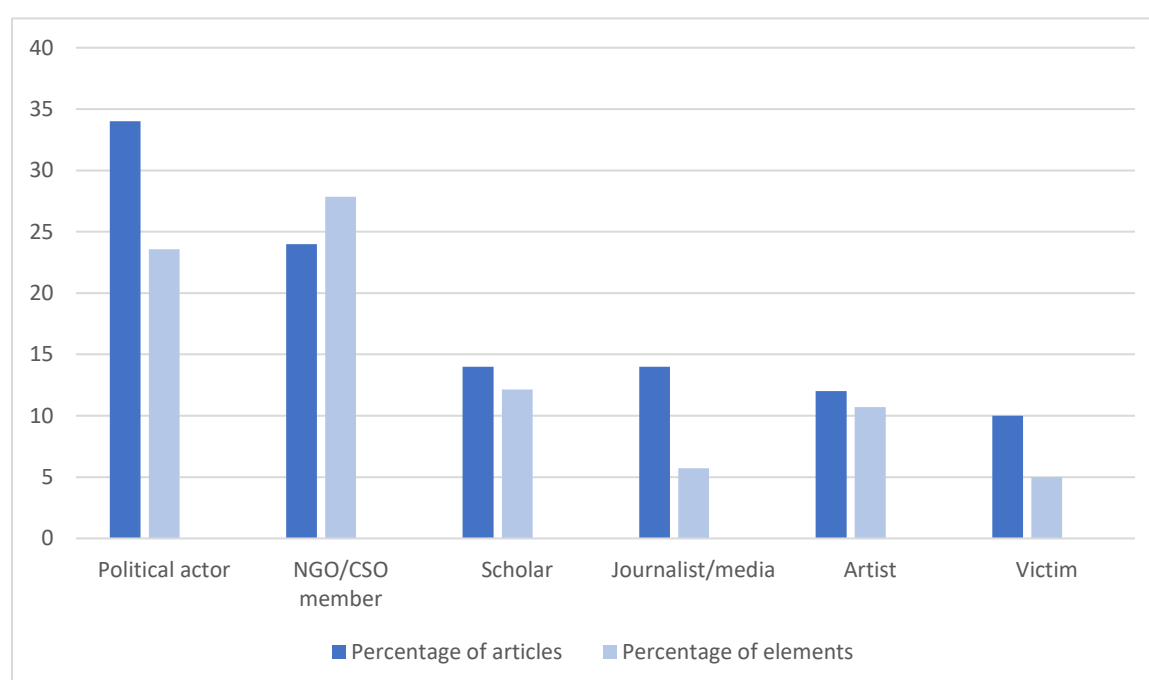
The Humanitarian Law Center is one of the founding member organizations of the Initiative for RECOM, and focused on supporting “post-Yugoslav societies in the promotion of the rule of law and acceptance of the legacy of mass human rights violations, and therefore in establishing the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators, serving justice, and preventing recurrence” (HLC, 2018). Based on this description, referring to ‘the rule of law’ and ‘criminal responsibility’, it can be argued that members of this organization represent a predominantly legal perspective on transitional justice. This implies that the contribution of NGO professionals to *The Voice* largely shapes the discourse from a legal perspective. Additionally, PEN Vlaanderen is focused on the promotion of free speech (PEN Vlaanderen, 2018), while the association Transitional Justice, Responsibility and Memory is focused on

diverse issues related to transitional justice (Coalition for RECOM, 2018b). What these organizations therefore have in common is that they are non-governmental organizations devoted to justice-related issues. Their combined contribution can therefore be seen as an expert perspective on obtaining justice, as one of the objectives of a truth commission.

4.1.2 Quoted actors

The analysis indicates that the actors quoted or paraphrased in the research units represent a wide range of subject positions. A total of 140 coded elements refer to 15 different categories of quoted actors; 6 categories that occur in at least ten percent of the research units, and 9 categories that occur in less than ten percent of the research units. The most dominant categories in terms of percentage of articles are 'Political actor', quoted in over a third of the research units, followed by 'NGO/CSO member', quoted in almost a quarter of the research units. Other dominant categories are 'Scholar', 'Journalist/media', 'Artist' and 'Victim', all quoted in around an eighth of the research units (see figure 4.2). In terms of element count, these are still the six most dominant categories, albeit in a slightly different order (see figure 4.2). These results indicate that both political actors and NGO or CSO members largely dominate the research units, implying that the Initiative for RECOM's discourse is predominantly shaped by political and civil perspectives.

Figure 4.2: Amount of articles (%) and amount of coded elements (%), per dominant category of quoted actors



However, the results also indicate that the research units represent a diversity of other subject positions. The research units not only quote scholars, journalists, artists and victims, but also quote legal professionals, religious leaders and RECOM members, and refer to other quoted subjects as 'veterans', 'survivors', 'students', members of 'the public', and 'human rights defenders' (see Appendix 2.1.3). Based on the discursive context in which The Voice was produced, characterized by consulting with diverse actors and navigating conflicting interests, it is no great surprise that the research units incorporate these different perspectives. Albeit to a moderate extent, The Voice indeed disseminates 'the voice of victims'. According to the literature, the involvement of 'victims' in the work of truth commissions implies a focus on sharing individual memories or stories, which are theorized to provide

authenticity to the narrative and contribute to acceptance of this narrative among the audience. The 'voice of victims' can therefore be seen as a perspective focused on individual experience, which produces an authentic narrative. It can be argued that this experience-based perspective is also represented by 'survivors' and 'veterans', since both identities imply a link to the events of the past conflicts. Furthermore, it can be argued that the social dimension of a truth commission's work, as discussed in the literature, is also represented, by engaging for instance members of 'the public', journalists as members of the media, and 'artists' and religious leaders as prominent public figures. This implies a focus on inspiring public debate, which is theorized to contribute to a shared narrative or 'collective memory'. Finally, based on the literature about forensic 'truth', it can be argued that scholars and legal professionals represent an authoritative perspective, since these subject positions imply a level of knowledge or expertise.

Although offering a diversity of subject positions, with different implications on the constructed narrative, the research units are largely dominated by political actors and NGO/CSO members, which is why they are examined more closely.

4.1.2.1 Political actors

The analysis indicates that the research units disseminate the voices of a number of different political actors. On the one hand, these voices represent international perspectives. International interests are represented by for instance "the US Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina" (48), the "deputy spokesperson for the US State Department" (50), the "Parliament of Australia" (22), and "the High Representative of the international community in Bosnia & Herzegovina" (39 & 50). However, these international voices are predominantly European. The European perspective is represented by the "European Commission" (2) and the "the spokesperson for the President" of the EC (50), members of the European Parliament (12, 21 & 50), "the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe" (29 & 31), and "the Austrian Embassy in Sarajevo" (11). These results can be explained by the discursive context, indicating that the EU is not only an important donor for the Initiative for RECOM, but that RECOM is also promoted by the EU as a means to achieve EU membership for Western Balkan states. Since both the Coalition and the EU want RECOM to be established, it is likely that the voices of European actors are reproduced by the research units as voices of support regarding the commission and its objectives.

On the other hand, the voices of political actors also represent regional perspectives. The domestic interests of Yugoslav successor states are primarily represented by mayors, members of parliament, ministers and presidents from different states. These quoted actors include for instance the Mayor of Sarajevo (7), "a Montenegrin MP" (12), "the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo" (50), the "President of Croatia" (49 & 50), and the "President of Serbia" (28 & 50). These results can be explained by the discursive context, indicating that the Initiative for RECOM has been concerned with attracting political support since its conception, which has not always been forthcoming. Perhaps the dominance of political perspectives in the research units is a way of celebrating those who have given support, and highlighting their opinions, and/or a way of criticizing those who have not. Whatever reason, however, it is clear that political perspectives are placed on the forefront, overshadowing the voices of for instance 'victims' or scholars. This implies that the struggle for political support takes priority over the concerns of other segments of society in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse. Furthermore, it also implies that the objects and concepts of the discourse in part fall within the domain of politics.

4.1.2.2 NGO and CSO members

The analysis indicates that the research units disseminate the voices of a variety of non-governmental and civil society organizations. Actors related to two of the Initiative's founding member organizations

are quoted in several research units, including the Humanitarian Law Center (13, 20, 20, 25 & 50), and Documenta (4, 12 & 20). An additional 25 distinct organizations are referred to in relation to quoted actors, including organizations such as the “Youth Initiative for Human Rights” (20, 34 & 50), “Civic Initiatives” (9), the “Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights from Osijek” (11), and the “Montenegrin Center for Civic Education” (20). These results can be explained by the discursive context, indicating that over a hundred organizations are part of the Coalition for RECOM and have contributed to the consultation process. As an initiative born from civil society, as opposed to political negotiations, it is understandable that NGOs and CSOs are some of the primary contributors to its discourse. Furthermore, these findings imply that the objects and concepts of the discourse are not only represented as a political affair, but also fall within the domain of civil society.

Furthermore, the analysis also indicates that a large portion of organizations represents specific interest groups, primarily focused on victims. These organizations include for instance “the Osijek Association of Victims of Homeland War” (12), “the Association of Kosmet Victims” (34), “the Association of Families of Detained and Missing Persons of Zvornik” (20), and “Podgorica’s Association of Families of the Kidnapped, Killed and Missing “Red Peony” (4). These findings indicate that although individual ‘victims’ are not the main subject position represented in the discourse, their perspective nonetheless has a substantial impact due to the relative dominance of subjects speaking from the position of victims’ organizations. This implies that while the discourse might not be primarily focused on disseminating the individual voices of victims, it is largely shaped by perspectives representing the interests of victims.

4.1.3 Answering the sub-question

In conclusion, it can be argued that a number of subject positions dominate and shape the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse. Although the research units are also shaped by for instance religious, artistic and public perspectives, they primarily represent the voices of civil society (including victim representatives), politicians, journalists, and scholars. This implies that the discourse is both authoritative and focused on engaging the public, and represented as both a social and a political enterprise. In so far, these results accurately reflect the discursive context in which The Voice was produced, characterized by a set of diverse and sometimes conflicting interests. This raises questions concerning what objects and concepts are reproduced by this diversity of perspectives and interests, which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.2 The level of inquiry

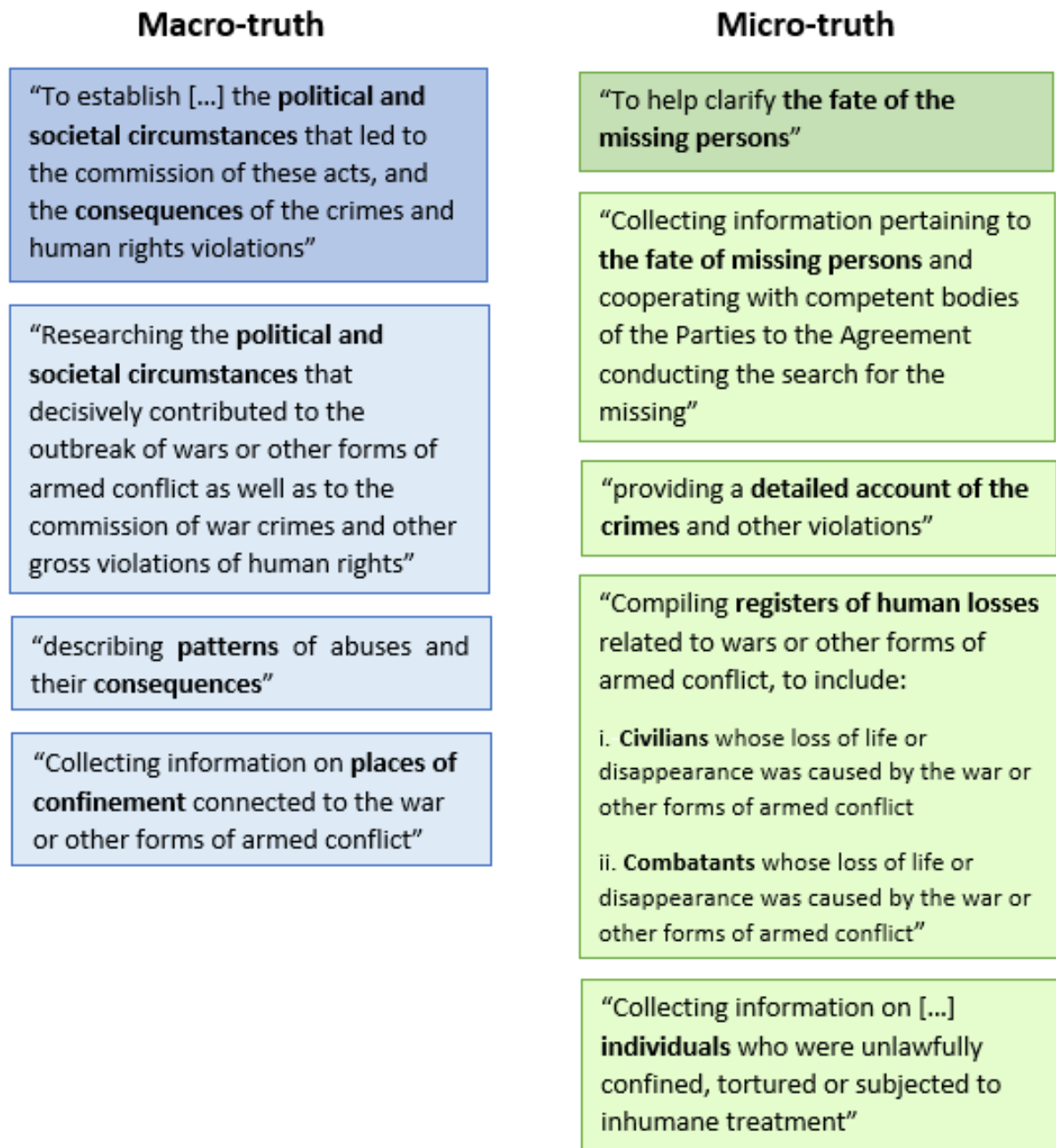
In order to examine RECOM's conceptualization of 'truth' regarding the results of investigation, this section answers the following sub-question:

'What level of inquiry regarding truth-seeking is addressed in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse?'

As discussed in section '3.3.2.2 Code scheme: The level of inquiry', RECOM's expressed objectives and functions point to intentions regarding the investigation of both the micro- and macro-level. When examining these functions and objectives, it can be argued that the macro-level is primarily focused on investigating the 'political and societal circumstances' contributing to the outbreak of the conflicts, or the conflict causes, and on the consequences of the violence. Furthermore, this level of inquiry also aims to investigate patterns of violations and organizational structures, focused on places of confinement (see figure 4.3). Alternatively, the micro-level aims to provide 'a detailed account of the crimes', representing a general reference to micro-truth. More specifically, one of RECOM's main objectives concerns clarifying 'the fate of the missing persons'. This objective is repeated by one of RECOM's functions, aiming to collect information and conduct 'the search for the missing'. The attention paid to missing persons implies that they represent a priority for the Initiative for RECOM. Furthermore, the micro-level also focusses on 'collecting' or 'compiling' information about 'human losses', and 'individuals who were confined, tortured, or subjected to inhumane treatment'. By referring to these types of victims specifically, these functions imply a focus on the human dimension of the conflict, or a victim-centric approach to truth-seeking, as opposed to a legal or 'impartial' focus on cases or crimes. These references to specific categories also imply a focus on a select range of violations, including enforced disappearance, killing, unlawful confinement, torture, and severe ill treatment.

This first overview provides insight into the diversity of results RECOM aims to establish, creating a mix of micro- and macro-level inquiries. By referring to both causes, consequences, patterns and organizational structures *and* to a detail-oriented approach to crimes, cases of missing persons and other categories of victims, the stated objectives and functions give the impression that both levels of truth are relatively equally represented in the commission's planned proceedings. What has not become apparent, however, is the level of importance attributed to each individual objective and function. According to the literature, truth commissions often use a brief micro-analysis as a point of departure for a more thorough and profound inquiry of the macro-level of truth. Is RECOM similarly invested in painting the bigger picture, using lists of victims and detailed accounts of crimes to arrive at a more profound or broader 'truth' regarding the outbreak of the conflicts and their consequences? Or do the representations of 'the missing', 'victims', 'human losses' and 'individuals', as opposed to less human-centric concepts such as 'cases' and 'crimes', indicate that people and their personal experiences are the commission's primary concern? A brief overview of the elements present in the analyzed articles followed by an in-depth examination of statements provides more insight into the levels of 'truth' addressed in RECOM's discourse (see Appendix 2.2.1 for a table containing the data used in this analysis).

Figure 4.3: RECOM's objectives and functions pertaining to macro- and micro-truth

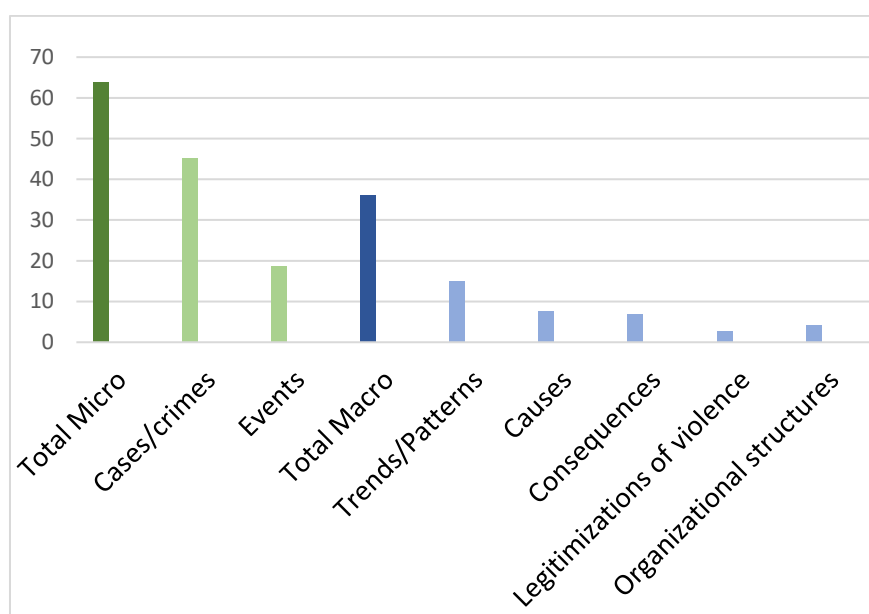


Source: Coalition for RECOM, 2011a, pp. 6-9

4.2.1 A brief overview

The quantitative counting of elements present in the research units indicates that the micro-level and macro-level are not equally represented in the research units. The category ‘Individual crimes or cases’ displays the highest element count of all categories, making up almost half of the total amount of coded elements referring to the level of inquiry (see figure 4.4). This category is followed by ‘Specific events’, representing under one-fifth of the coded elements. Together, these categories comprise the micro-level, representing almost two-third of the elements referring to the level of inquiry. In comparison, the macro-level is shaped by approximately one-third of the coded elements. Its highest scoring category, ‘Trends and Patterns’, closely follows the category ‘Specific events’. This category is followed by ‘Causes’, ‘Consequences’, ‘Organizational Structures’, and ‘Legitimization of violence’, respectively (see Appendix 2.2.2 for a table of the results per category).

Figure 4.4: Micro- versus macro-truth: percentage of elements (%) present in the research units, per category



Based on these findings, it can be argued that the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse primarily focusses on the micro-level of inquiry, and represents the macro-level to a lesser extent. Although the described objectives and functions represent both levels of inquiry relatively equally, the elements in the research units suggest that the micro-level is more central to the initiative’s discourse than the macro-level. The three most dominant categories are individual crimes or cases, specific events, and trends and patterns, which is why they will be examined in relation to dominant patterns of statements.

An interesting observation regarding ‘Causes’ and ‘Consequences’, however, also deserves to be mentioned briefly. As discussed, the investigation of circumstances that contributed to the outbreak of the conflicts and of the consequences of the violence is explicitly mentioned as one of RECOM’s main objectives in the first issue of *The Voice*. The analysis of statements, however, indicates that later issues represent a different view. Several articles directly or indirectly discuss the aim to *not* investigate causes and consequences, including statements such as “that the establishment of the causes of war is an impossible task for a regional commission” (9), and “RECOM won’t deal with establishing the causes and consequences of the wars” (13). Based on these findings, it can therefore

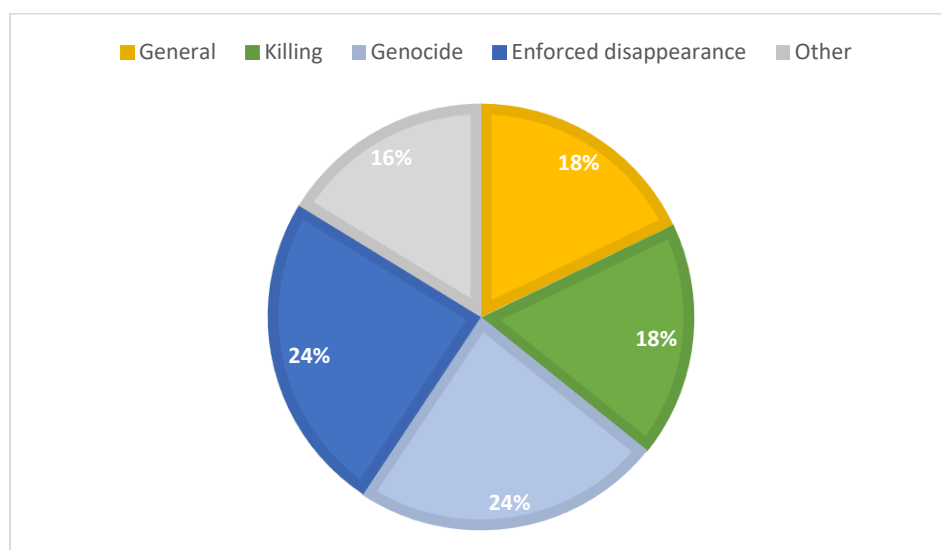
be argued that RECOM's objectives changed over the course of The Voice's publications, implying that other objectives or interests were prioritized over RECOM's initial objectives regarding macro-truth.

The next sections examine RECOM's priorities regarding the level of inquiry, by analyzing the signifying elements and patterns of statements corresponding with the three most dominant categories; individual crimes or cases, specific events, and trends and patterns.

4.2.2 Individual crimes or cases

Regarding the category 'Individual crimes or cases', the analysis indicates that signifying elements can be categorized corresponding with specific types of war crimes and other human rights violations. The quantitative counting of elements shows that the analyzed references to this category primarily concern the violations of enforced disappearance and genocide (see figure 4.5). Both sub-categories make up approximately one quarter of the references to individual crimes or cases, followed by references to killing and to crimes or cases in general. The sub-category 'Other' is comprised of references to torture, inhumane treatment, unlawful confinement, persecution, displacement and rape, which represent a small portion of the references (see Appendix 2.2.3).

Figure 4.5: Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of 'Individual crimes or cases'



These results indicate a focus on enforced disappearance, genocide and killing in RECOM's discourse. These results partly match the initiative's proclaimed objectives and functions, as described in the first part of this paragraph. Enforced disappearance relates to "[c]ollecting information pertaining to the fate of missing persons" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8), while both killing and genocide relate to "[c]ompiling registers of human losses related to wars and other forms of armed conflict" (!The Voice, 1/2011, p. 8). References to "[c]ollecting information on [...] individuals who were unlawfully confined, tortured or subjected to inhumane treatment" (!The Voice, 1/2011, pp. 8-9), however, are underrepresented in the research units. These findings imply that RECOM's discourse indicates a prioritization of the first two functions over the latter.

The analysis of statements regarding these categories or functions indicates that the discourse focusses on information about victims, including their names, descriptions of suffering, and the fate of the missing, related to a number of other objectives.

4.2.2.1 The importance of a focus on victims

The qualitative analysis of statements indicates that RECOM's discourse directly relates a focus on individual crimes and cases to post-conflict recovery. According to one article, RECOM members agreed that:

“establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights, and establishing the fate of missing persons from the wars of 1991-2001 in the former Yugoslavia was extremely important for the process of dealing with the past and reconciliation in the region.” (13)

Along similar lines, another article states that “peace-building and reconciliation are possible only if the facts about war crimes and serious violations of human rights are established and only if a list of all victims is compiled” (19). In other words, these statements indicate that a focus on investigating individual crimes, thereby resolving the fate of the missing and naming the victims, is necessary in order to deal with the past and achieve peace and reconciliation. According to the initiative, this recovery has so far been halted:

“For over a decade, since the weapons have been muted, post-Yugoslav societies have not been given a chance to cope with the heavy legacy of the war past in large part because to date there is no clarity about the fate of a large number of those who were killed, forcibly disappeared, tortured, and persecuted during those years.” (37)

This relates to RECOM's expressed ‘primary function’; “which is to establish the facts about human sufferings in the recent wars waged on the territory of the region and the creation of public space for announcing all victims in the region” (48). It can therefore be argued that, in the proclaimed interest of ‘coping’ with the past, the initiative aims to name the victims of the conflict and investigate their fates and suffering. Although also mentioning the tortured and the prosecuted, the quantitative analysis has indicated that the initiative is primarily concerned with the missing and the deceased. One article expresses the need “to seek” the victims, by “literally digging from hole to hole and uncovering the remains” (42). Furthermore, these remains must be tied “to names and surnames”, because: “[w]hat we need is names of dead persons, not some national percentage” (42). These statements imply that the missing must first be found, before the deceased victims of the conflicts can be properly named.

4.2.2.2 The fate of the missing

Regarding the fate of the missing, the analyzed articles reflect a critical tone concerning the progress made in this area. In the context of Kosovo, one article states:

“Before the publication of the report of the International Committee of the Red Cross, there were more than 2,000 missing persons; today, about 1,800 of them are still recorded as missing, although in the meantime the remains of another 400 have been found. Unfortunately, the identification process has been halted for four years.” (20)

In the context of Croatia, a similarly critical view is expressed, stating that: “From August 30, 2002 to August 30, 2003, the fates of just 86 people was resolved. This is a tragic and devastating fact” (4). The

article therefore states that: “the governments in the region must speed up the location, exhumation and identification of the missing” (4). Furthermore, the governments are also urged to: “support the establishment of RECOM, primarily because a regional commission would contribute to a more effective resolution of the fate of the missing persons, and the detection and discovery of secret mass graves” (4). Jointly, these statements imply that not enough has been done to resolve the fate of the missing and that RECOM can play an important role in speeding up this process, thereby linking the urgency of the matter to the legitimacy of RECOM as a truth commission.

Furthermore, the prioritization of this objective is implied by the statement requesting “that no country in the region become a member of the European Union until the fate of missing persons was resolved” (4). The initiative’s discourse supports the necessity of resolving this issue by referring to the families of the missing. In one article, these families are addressed by stating that: “A few names of those who died are known, but more than 13,000 families of forcibly disappeared persons are still searching for their loved ones” (37). In another article, family members are directly quoted, thereby providing an emotional layer to the issue. Under the heading ‘The voice of victims’, one man is quoted saying:

“Just give me a piece of information so that I can find them, so that I can bury them, so that I can close this chapter of my life,” so that I can go to the cemetery and tell the children who their grandfather was [...]” (8)

This statement supports the statement discussed earlier, arguing that “post-Yugoslav societies have not been given a chance to cope with the heavy legacy of the war”, since there is “no clarity about the fate” of victims (37). It can be argued that the initiative emphasizes this point of view by providing personal testimony, which reflects the need to ‘close this chapter’ of people’s lives by means of investigating what happened to the victims of the war. Along similar lines, a woman is quoted saying:

“I would be happy if one of my neighbors – Ramo, Ibro, Muhamed, whoever – came to me and said: “Mrs. Mira, your son and husband are here. I know for sure that they are there. Bury them with dignity.” I would be grateful to him for that message for the rest of my life. My wounds would be very much alleviated. My conscience would be peaceful.” (8)

Both testimonies refer to a type of truth, arguing that they need ‘a piece of information’ or that they would be grateful for ‘a message’ about where their missing family members are. This need for truth is directly addressed by a member of the Association of the Women of Srebrenica, who is quoted saying:

“For me, the truth would mean that I am told where my dead ones were killed, and where I can find them to bury them with dignity somewhere, where I too could come and recite the Fatiha, and be with the souls of my beloved ones at least for a moment. This is truth for us.” (8)

It can therefore be argued that all three testimonies support the view that micro-truth is required, not only to ‘alleviate personal wounds’ but also to deal with the past and achieve reconciliation on a larger scale, by investigating cases of missing persons.

4.2.2.3 *The naming of victims and their suffering*

Like the fate of the missing, the naming of victims is also linked to dealing with the past and reconciliation. In one article, the initiative states that: “The naming of the victims of war crimes and victimised members of the armed forces is a condition without which, dealing with the past will remain politically marginalized” (36). Furthermore, this article also states:

“The naming of the victims and combatants (police, volunteers and members of other armed groups involved in the conflict) contributes to the reconstruction of the human dimension of the past, narrows down the room for lies and manipulation and helps to build a culture of solidarity and compassion” (36)

According to the literature, compassion is related to “the mending of broken relationships within society” (Godobo-Madikizela, 2008, p. 70), which is one way of referring to social healing or reconciliation. It can therefore be argued that the initiative’s discourse proposes the naming of victims as beneficial to society as a whole. Furthermore, the naming of victims is also argued to minimize ‘the room for lies and manipulation’. Along similar lines, another article states that: “The goal is to arrive at undeniable facts: people with names [and] descriptions of their suffering” (7). The use of ‘undeniable’ in this statement implies that denial regarding aspects of the conflict occurs in the region, which is supported by the discursive context. It can therefore be argued that the naming of victims is perceived as a tool in dealing with the past, contributing to social healing and combatting political manipulation.

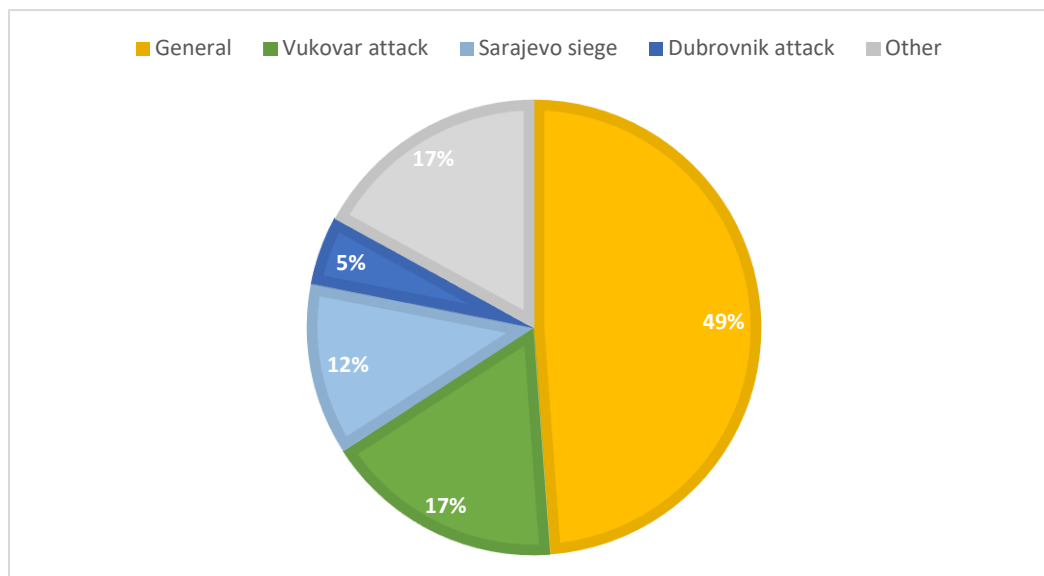
Perhaps due to these overarching objectives, the initiative claims that “the principal task of RECOM would be the compilation of the names of the victims” (36). Similarly, another article states that: “there is no political work of greater importance today but to produce that big book of the dead, which would contain the names of all those killed, persecuted or displaced since 1991, including the names of the killed killers, every single one of them” (7). According to the initiative, this task has so far not been accomplished, stating that: “no official records of the killed and injured have been compiled yet, which would include facts about the circumstances of suffering” (12). The initiative’s discourse provides examples of this ‘human dimension of the past’, by creating a platform for the victims and families of victims to share their stories. Each issue of *!The Voice* publishes testimonies by those who experienced or witnessed crimes, under the heading ‘The voice of victims’. These testimonies are similar in the way that they generally provide the names of individual victims and describe what happened to them. These tales are the definition of micro-truth, representing highly detailed accounts of specific crimes. As examples of what the commission aims to accomplish, naming every victim and describing his or her suffering, these testimonies can therefore be seen to embody part of RECOM’s envisioned end result regarding the micro-level of inquiry.

In short, the qualitative analysis has shown that the research units primarily focus on the necessity of resolving the fate of the missing, naming all the victims of the wars and describing their suffering, in order to highlight the ‘human dimension of the past’, combat political manipulation and achieve reconciliation. It can therefore be argued that RECOM’s discourse reflects a largely victim-centric approach to the micro-level of inquiry.

4.2.3 Specific events

Regarding the category 'Specific events', the quantitative counting of elements shows that the analyzed references to this category primarily concern wartime events in general (see figure 4.6). By referring to for instance "[e]stablishing the official truth about events" (6) and to gathering "the facts about the events in this region" (12), the initiative indirectly expresses the objective to investigate specific events and thereby produce 'facts' or 'the official truth'. The sub-category 'General' is followed by 'Vukovar attack', 'Sarajevo siege' and 'Dubrovnik attack' respectively. The category 'Other' refers to a variety of specific events that are only mentioned once in the research units (see Appendix 2.2.4). The prevalence of references in the research units to what happened in Vukovar, Sarajevo and Dubrovnik, over what has happened elsewhere, indicates that these events are dominant in RECOM's discourse. When relating this to the literature on 'window cases' (Chapman & Ball, 2001), it can be argued that these events are either representative or hold special significance.

Figure 4.6: Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of 'Specific events'



When considering the significance of these three cities, it can be argued that they are symbols of civilian fatality or victimhood in general. In discussing the 'mass killing of civilians' during sieges, Shaw (2003, p. 130) uses these cities as a macabre example. He states:

"In conditions of modern urban warfare, besieged populations are targets for the sniper – producing a daily toll of civilian death – and for artillery bombardment – periodically inflicting larger massacres, as we saw in the sieges of Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo and East Mostar during the Yugoslav wars." (Shaw, 2003, p. 130)

It can therefore be argued that these cities are significant due to the occurrence of 'larger massacres' of civilians. Along similar lines, Kung (1998, p. 122) addresses an example of 'Serbian aggression' by referring to "the bombardment of the civil population of Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities". The use of these cities as examples in academic literature, concerning the targeting of civilians, implies that these cities represent important symbols of civilian fatality. It can therefore be

argued that the representation of these cities in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse implies a victim-centric approach to selecting or representing significant events.

As discussed, however, the discourse primarily consists of references to events in general, as opposed to specific events. The analysis of statements indicates that the Initiative for RECOM is less specific about its intentions regarding events, than about its intentions regarding individual crimes and cases. General statements are made regarding "[t]he need to research the events that marked the 20th century and preserve the memory of them" (44), and that it is "necessary to clarify those events for which there is still not enough understanding" (49). Another article states that "a common position on the key facts of the events that took place during the wars in the 1990s must be established" (29). Along similar lines, it is stated that it is necessary "to collectively establish a shared public narrative of the events of the past" (45). This task is argued to be "very important, because there [is] no universally accepted version of the events from the 1990s at the national level" (6). References to 'a common position' and 'universally accepted version' do imply that constructing the truth about the events is a less straightforward task than for instance naming the victims. Names, as has been discussed, are considered to be 'undeniable facts', whereas establishing the truth about events arguably requires one to accept a 'version' or take a 'position'. The difficulty of this venture is expressed by another statement, arguing:

"Establishing the official truth about events, providing redress to victims, and deterring future crimes – these tasks were so difficult that they became especially frustrating to those for whom they were primarily intended" (6)

The difficulty seemingly lies in the view that there are multiple interpretations of the past, described by this statement:

"[I]nterpretation begins with an early arrangement of facts. It does not mean, however, that we should give up comparing discrepancies and agreements; even if we are unable to present an agreed view of the events, we at least need to know and incorporate in educational programmes the awareness that there are different interpretations." (46)

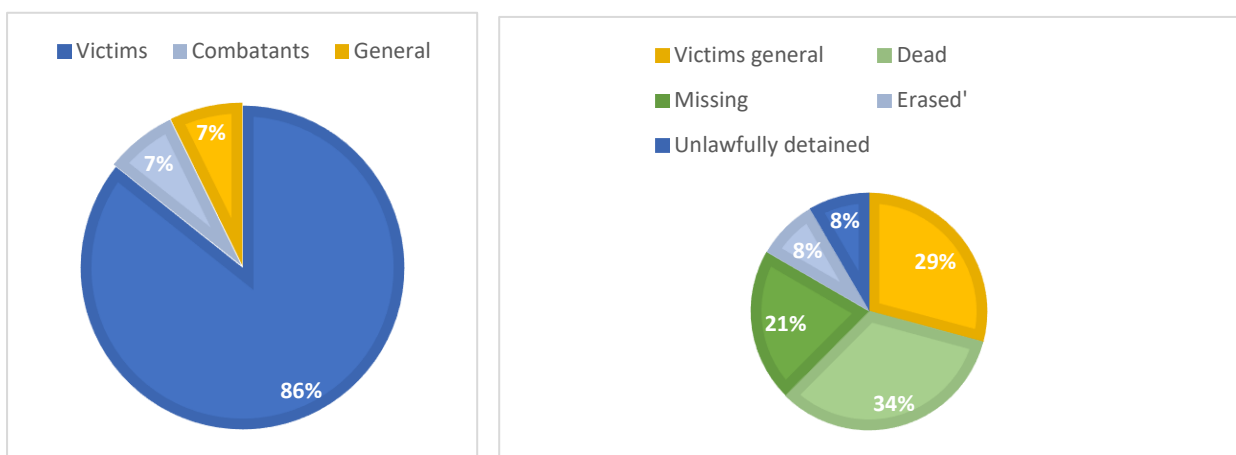
Although this is argued to be a difficult task, it is nonetheless stated that the establishment of a "shared narrative of the past [...] is important in the process of achieving a stable peace" (45).

Based on these findings, it can be argued that the research units are largely unspecific about how RECOM aims to approach the investigation of events. However, events are discussed in relation to 'a common position', a 'shared public narrative', a 'universally accepted version', and an 'agreed view', implying that the construction of a 'truth' about events requires more than establishing objective findings. These concepts related to 'collective memory' will be discussed in-depth in section '4.3 Truth discourses'.

4.2.4 Trends and Patterns

Regarding the category ‘Trends and Patterns’, the analysis indicates that this category is primarily comprised of elements referring to different types of statistics. The content analysis indicates that a small fraction of the elements refer to statistics regarding ‘Combatants’, and to statistics in general, including references to for instance “establishing *the figures* [...] about the wars” (12) (see Appendix 2.2.5). Over four-fifth of the analyzed references to statistics, however, concern the sub-category ‘Victims’ (see figure 4.7). These references include phrases containing the general term ‘victims’, like “the total number of *victims*” (7), and phrases referring to specific types of victims, such as: “more than 2,000 *missing persons*” (20) and “around 120,000 *people were killed* in the war” (42).

Figures 4.7 & 4.8: ‘Division of elements belonging to each sub-category of ‘Statistics’ & ‘Division of elements belonging to the sub-category ‘Statistics about victims’



The content analysis indicates that approximately one-third of these references pertain to the ‘Dead’, little under one-third pertain to ‘Victims’ in general and approximately one-fifth concern the ‘Missing’ (see figure 4.8). The remaining two victim categories that are mentioned in relation to statistics are the ‘Erased’, concerning people without legal status, and the ‘Unlawfully detained’. It can therefore be argued that in relation to “establishing the figures [...] about the wars” (12), RECOM’s discursive practices primarily focus on the number of killed persons, followed by victim numbers in general and the number of missing persons.

When taking a closer look at the statements regarding statistics, it becomes apparent that the establishment of victim numbers is argued to be an unresolved and pressing issue. Firstly, it appears to be an unresolved issue since exact numbers are not provided and expressed quantities vary. In one issue of !The Voice, it is argued that: “more than 14,000 people in the region [are] still registered as missing” (31). The next issue, however, expresses that “more than 13,000 families of forcibly disappeared persons are still searching for their loved ones” (37). The substantial difference between these estimates, being 1,000 missing persons, points to guesswork and uncertainty regarding exact victim numbers. Similarly, pertaining to the total number of deceased, one article refers to “the horrific drama that ended in more than 100,000 victims” (25), while another states that “around 120,000 people were killed in the war” (42). This discrepancy is directly addressed in this article, by arguing that while the number of victims is ‘horrifying’;

“Yet more horrifying still, is the fact that we have to use the phrase ‘around’, that is, give or take, some ten thousand deceased – thus convincingly demonstrating how the post-war disdain for the victims almost matches that during the war.” (42)

The lack of certainty regarding the most basic facts, like the number of victims, is thereby not only reproduced but also directly addressed by the initiative’s discourse.

Secondly, the establishment of victim numbers is represented as a pressing issue that needs to be addressed, due to the persistence of political manipulation. According to one article, the current state of affairs in the region is characterized by “a problem with institutionalized interpretations of history, and that everyone remained shut in their own exclusivist interpretation, not only of the war but, what was even more problematic, of victims’ numbers as well” (12). The initiative therefore urges the region’s governments to “stop ‘bidding up’ the number of victims by “compiling all kinds of lists and airing false promises for professional or personal interests.”” (4). The issue of these institutionalized interpretations is directly linked to the purpose of the commissions, expressed by the statement that: “RECOM, both as an idea and in practice, has the potential to prevent political manipulation of the number of victims and the spinning of national myths about the conflict” (9). This purpose is supported by the argument that: “Manipulation of individual victims, victim numbers and the scale of atrocities could draw the region into new clashes, and such practices must be countered with facts” (1). These ‘facts’ are represented as the purview of the initiative, by commenting on: “the importance of RECOM in establishing the figures and facts about the wars and the crimes” (12).

In short, these statements about statistics profess the view that since the manipulation of victim numbers can trigger the recurrence of violence, it is in the interest of peace that RECOM must fulfil its mandate and establish ‘the figures and facts’ about the conflict. It can therefore be argued that references to statistics are an important part of the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse, due to the persistence of political manipulation regarding victim numbers in the Former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the lack of exact data and the political manipulation regarding victim numbers are represented by the commission’s discourse as important issues, in order to legitimize the initiative’s envisioned proceedings.

The qualitative analysis of statements, however, also shows that victim numbers are not the initiative’s only or primary concern. In one article, the view of a RECOM member is expressed by stating that “he believed that the numbers were important, but also stressed the importance of knowing the circumstances under which people were killed and suffered” (12). Along similar lines, another article states:

“the task for transitional justice lies not in just insisting upon numbers, but digging, literally digging from hole to hole and uncovering the remains of human destinies, attempting to tie them to names and surnames.” (42)

The relevance of establishing numbers is minimized further when, in that same article, the author states:

“What we need is names of dead persons, not some national percentage, or numbers in total (which are always doubtful). If this is achieved – as RECOM has been trying to do – everything will find its right place. But it will not do to pluck a number first, only to seek a sufficient number

of victims to justify that number. We need to go from individual destiny to individual destiny, and find who the victims of war really were.” (42)

These statements support the results of the quantitative analysis, indicating that references to individual crimes or cases are more dominant in the research units than references to statistics. Based on these statements, it can be argued that this is the case because the investigation of individual cases is prioritized over ‘plucking numbers’ by the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse.

4.2.5 Answering the sub-question

In conclusion, it can be argued that the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse regarding the level of inquiry is primarily shaped by a focus on micro-truth, while paying limited attention to the macro-level. Individual crimes and cases and specific events, shaping the micro-level, are the most dominant categories, while the establishment of statistics, shaping the main category of macro-truth, is represented as an objective of secondary importance. The limited importance of the macro-level is supported by the exclusion of the erstwhile primary objective focused on establishing causes and consequences of violence. The findings therefore imply that the importance of a ‘truth’ regarding the broader impact of the system was minimized in favor of other objectives or considerations. These findings can be explained by considering the literature on truth commissions and the discursive context in which the Coalition for RECOM operates.

According to the literature, the investigation of the macro-level is necessary in order to construct a more profound ‘truth’ concerning the broad impact of the system, including evaluations regarding the wider responsibility of certain actors in creating or perpetuating this system. By eliminating the objective to examine causes and consequence, the Coalition for RECOM therefore effectively eliminates the possibility to assess which parties or actors were responsible for the outbreak of the conflicts and the perpetuation of violence. Within the context of competing versions of ‘truth’ in the former Yugoslavia, aggravated by the assessments of the ICTY regarding the responsibility of certain nationals, this elimination implies that RECOM aims to construct a non-divisive and uncontested narrative. Since the literature indicates that competing ‘truths’ are predominantly focused on legitimizing the roles of ethno-national groups in the conflicts and attributing blame to other groups, the construction of an official macro-truth would likely counter some aspects of these narratives while feeding others. Consequently, this might lead to contestation and contribute to divisions, as was the case with the ICTY’s findings.

Alternatively, the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse legitimizes its focus on reconstructing ‘the human dimension of the past’, incorporating a victim-centric approach, by arguing that it contributes to reconciliation and prevents political manipulation. The investigation of individual crimes and cases is related to a select number of specific representations, focused on providing the names of victims and descriptions of their suffering. Along similar lines, representations of trends and patterns are largely focused on victim numbers. These different objectives are summarized in the following statement:

“The goal is to arrive at undeniable facts: people with names, descriptions of their suffering, and finally – the total number of victims.” (7)

This reference to ‘undeniable facts’ conveys the assumption that this victim-centric micro-truth cannot be denied, implying that it cannot be contested by the competing ethno-national groups. Furthermore,

the analyzed representations also indicate a focus on victims in general, or specific categories of victims including the deceased and missing, as opposed to representing victim groups in terms of different ethnicities or nationalities. This inclusive approach conveys the message that ethno-national differences are irrelevant when it comes to victims, or that all ethno-nationalist groups are equal in terms of victimhood. This represents a distinctly different approach to victimhood than the one adopted by the ICTY, which arguably conveyed the opposite message. According to the literature, the ICTY's verdicts contributed to an increased sense of victimhood among Bosniaks, and to a lesser extent Croats, while feeding the Serb nationalists' view "that Serb victims are ignored" (Moll, 2013, p. 917). Since the idea of RECOM was based on the view that the ICTY "somewhat failed to contribute its findings to the construction of a common and non-contradictory narrative of the past" (Orlandi, 2014, p. 110), it logically follows that the Coalition for RECOM adopts a different approach in order to reach this objective. These considerations therefore support the interpretation that RECOM aims to construct a victim-centric micro-truth, in order to be as non-divisive, or reconciliatory, as possible.

A final observation, however, diminished the inclusiveness of this approach. Although the research units also represent 'victims' in general, specific victim representations largely focus on the killed and missing, representing other victim categories such as the unlawfully detained and tortured to a limited extent. This implies that while the discourse indicates a victim-centric approach to the level of inquiry, this approach incorporates a predominantly narrow conception of victimhood. A possible explanation for the dominance of references to the fate of the missing can be found in the post-conflict context and the legacy of the ICTY. According to Hronesova (2015), "the trauma of not knowing what happened to loved ones is a burning and everyday issue for thousands of people around the world". She adds that this issue was especially pressing in the former Yugoslavia, where tens of thousands of people were missing in the immediate aftermath of the conflicts. In order to address this problem, "it soon became the primary playground for international transitional justice efforts" (Hronesova, 2015). In addressing the legacy of the ICTY, however, a number of actors criticize its efforts in this area (ICTY Outreach Programme, 2013). A report by the ICTY Outreach Programme (2013, p. 27) reproduces numerous statements from civil society actors on the issue of missing persons, including the view that "the Tribunal has not done enough to shed light on what happened to these people". Based on these considerations, it is likely that RECOM focusses on addressing the fate of the missing since it remains unresolved in the wake of the ICTY, and represents an enduring trauma for the affected families.

4.3 Truth discourses

As discussed, a truth commission's constructed 'truth' is not only shaped by its objects of investigation and level of inquiry, but also by its selected practices and objectives. In order to examine these different dimensions of 'truth', or truth discourses, this section answers the following sub-question:

'To what extent do different Truth discourses (Forensic, Narrative, Social and Restorative) shape the Initiative for RECOM's conception of 'truth' and what are their implications?'

In order to fully examine the extent to which the different discourses shape the Initiative for RECOM's conception of 'truth', this section first presents an overview of the research units, followed by an in-depth examination of each discourse and the corresponding practices, objectives and related concepts.

4.3.1 Overview

According to the analysis, each dimension of truth is represented by a diversity of concepts, practices and objectives present in the research units. Restorative discourse is the most dominant category, with over a third of the total amount of elements referring to the different discourses, present in over four-fifth of the research units (see figures 4.9 & 4.10). This category is followed by Forensic discourse and Social discourse, with almost a quarter of the total amount of elements each, in over two-third and almost two-third of the articles, respectively. The least dominant category is Narrative discourse, with little over an eighth of the total amount of elements, in under two-third of the articles.

Figure 4.9: Division of coded elements, per discourse category

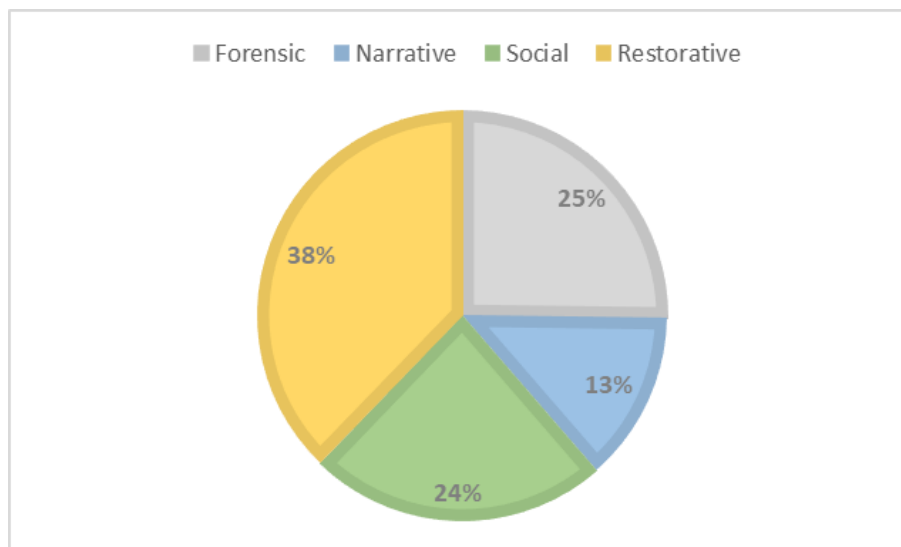
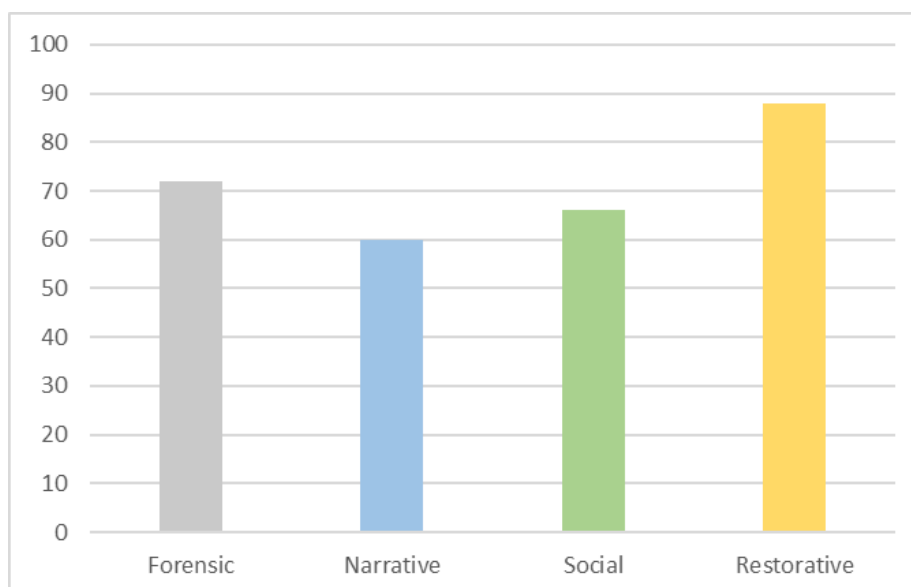


Figure 4.10: Percentage of research units in which elements are present, per discourse category



When considering the distinct codes, the analysis indicates that 'Establishing facts', as part of the sub-category 'Forensic objectives', is the most dominant overall code, applied to over fifteen percent of the total amount of signifying elements and present in over half of the research units (see Appendix

2.3.2). This code is followed by 'Reconciliation', which belongs to the sub-category 'Restorative objectives', applied to over ten percent of the total amount of elements and present in over half the research units (see Appendix 2.3.3). However, the sub-category 'Restorative objectives' contains a wide range of other codes related to the concept of reconciliation, such as 'Non-recurrence of violence', 'Building trust' and 'Regional cooperation'. Taken together, these different 'Restorative objectives' are applied to almost a quarter of the total amount of elements, present in over three-quarter of the research units (see Appendix 2.3.3). Comparatively, codes referring to 'Forensic objectives', including not only 'Establishing facts' but also 'Historical record', are applied to little over a sixth of the total amount of elements, present in almost two-third of the research units (see Appendix 2.3.2). It can therefore be argued that, while 'Establishing facts' is the most dominant single code, the diverse 'Restorative objectives' represent the most dominant category in the research units.

Following 'establishing facts' and 'Reconciliation', 'Dialogue' is the third most dominant code, belonging to 'Social practices' (see Appendix 2.3.4). It is applied to under five percent of the elements, in under a third of the articles, indicating a large drop between the second and third most dominant code. However, the sub-category 'Social practices', including practices coded as 'Outreach', 'Public hearings', 'Participation' and 'Education', is the most dominant of all sub-categories related to practices, including for instance 'Restorative practices' (see Appendix 2.3.1 & 2.3.4).

It can therefore be argued that the Initiative for RECOM's discourse is primarily shaped by Restorative discourse, focused on reconciliation and related concepts, followed by a focus on establishing facts, as part of Forensic discourse, and on Social practices including dialogue. This is a remarkable finding, since the literature indicates that a focus on reconciliation and Restorative discourse has been shown to limit the construction of Forensic 'truth', or 'objective facts', in certain cases. Since 'Establishing facts' is the most dominant code, it will be interesting to see what the analysis of statements reveals about the dynamic between Forensic and Restorative discourse. In order to understand each dimension's contribution to 'truth', these different discourses and corresponding codes will be examined in relation to dominant patterns of statements.

4.3.2 Forensic discourse

According to the analysis, Forensic discourse is primarily focused on 'Establishing facts', belonging to the sub-category of 'Forensic objectives'. Out of the 8 codes referring to Forensic discourse, this one code makes up over sixty percent of the coded elements in this category (see Appendix 2.3.2). References to 'Establishing facts' therefore form the focal point of the analysis of dominant patterns of statements.

Forensic practices, however, also deserve to be discussed briefly. The analysis indicates that 'General references to researching' is the most dominant code, closely followed by the more specific code of 'Discovery, Exhumations & Identification' (see Appendix 2.3.2). The relative dominance of this specific code, referring to practices related to the search for the missing, confirms the findings regarding the level of inquiry that indicate a focus on resolving the fate of missing persons. In comparison, references to 'Historical analysis' are underrepresented in the research units. The relative lack of references to specific methods or practices that include a more in-depth examination and interpretation of the conflict and contributing factors, confirm the findings that constructing macro-truth is not represented as a priority. This implies that RECOM is more concerned with establishing the basic facts, than with providing academic interpretation, which is discussed as part of the analysis of statements.

The thematic analysis of statements regarding 'Establishing facts' indicates that references to 'facts' are primarily made within the contexts of: the main purpose of the commission, interpretation and truth, manipulation and denial, and Restorative and Social discourses (see Appendix 2.3.6 for the

data used in this analysis). This section discusses the first three contexts, while Restorative and Social discourses will be discussed in the following sections.

4.3.2.1 RECOM as a fact-finding commission

Regarding the main purpose of the commission, the introductory article of the first issue of *The Voice* expresses the Initiative for RECOM's "ultimate goal – uncovering the facts and finding out the truth" (1). Along similar lines, RECOM is defined as "an extra-judicial mechanism designed to compile a record of the past based on facts" (1), whose first objective is "[t]o establish the facts about war crimes and other gross violations of human rights committed on the territory of the former SFRJ in the period from January 1, 1991 until December 31, 2001" (3). This objective is expressed in a number of other articles about the initiative, stating that "[f]acts about war crimes and the causes of war are the goals espoused by the Coalition for RECOM" (9), "whose task will be to collect the facts for the story of our common fall into barbarism" (18) and "provide a factual portrait of what happened in the former Yugoslavia in the period from 1991 to 2001" (9). This task is also referred to as "its primary function, which is to establish the facts about human sufferings in the recent wars waged on the territory of the region" (48).

Furthermore, the importance of this objective, 'establishing facts', is not only conveyed by referring to it as the 'ultimate goal' or 'primary function', but also by incorporating it in RECOM's main self-representation. Versions of "the future Regional Commission for establishing the facts about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia" (7) are used in a number of articles to represent the commission. Variations include for instance: "an independent fact-finding commission on war crimes and serious violations of human rights" (10), "the Regional Commission for the establishment of facts about the victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia (RECOM)" (13), and "a regional fact-finding mission" (25). Based on these findings, it can be argued that the Initiative for RECOM's discourse promotes 'establishing facts' as its main objective, implying a focus on 'objectivity'.

4.3.2.2 Truth and interpretation

Regarding Truth and interpretation, the analysis indicates that RECOM's discourse produces contradictory aims and different conceptions of 'truth', based on a represented difference between 'facts' and 'truth'. On the one hand, 'truth' and 'facts' are represented as distinct but complementary goals. As discussed, RECOM's 'ultimate goal' is described as "uncovering the facts *and* finding out the truth" (1). This statement implies that 'facts' and 'truth' are distinct concepts, but that they are combined to shape RECOM's 'ultimate goal'. This relationship is explained in another article, stating that the "circle [of lies and violence] can be broken with the aid of a) facts and b) meaningful interpretation (in the sense of the wider truth)" (42). This implies that 'truth', as RECOM's ultimate goal, is represented as the 'meaningful interpretation' of facts. Along similar lines, another article comments on supporting the Initiative for RECOM since it is "extremely important to collect the facts and interpret them" (12). The positive relationship between 'truth' and 'facts' is expressed by a number of other statements, including: "[t]he truth is a little easier to reach – it can be investigated, facts can be determined" (16), and "[t]he truth will communicate with the truth if the data, names, numbers are known" (7). It can therefore be argued that 'truth' is represented as an important objective that can be reached by establishing and interpreting 'facts'.

On the other hand, however, a large volume of statements expresses the view that 'uncovering the facts' should be the commission's priority, as opposed to 'finding out the truth'. This is supported by the dominant representation of RECOM as a fact-finding commission, as opposed to a 'truth commission', as discussed in the previous section. In line with this view, one article states:

“The idea of RECOM is not [...] an attempt to arrive at one undeniable truth. The goal is to arrive at undeniable facts: people with names, descriptions of their suffering, and finally – the total number of victims.” (7)

This statement is followed by the view that “what kind of truth will be drawn from these facts, and what kind of history will have been written on the basis of them, that is indeed less important” (7). In short, it is thus argued that ‘truth’ can be derived from facts, but that the establishment of facts is more important. In quoting another subject, this article also states:

“Information and names of people must be found. This does not mean that we will necessarily agree on the truth. I should remind us all that the wars were fought first with ideas, then in the newspapers, and finally with bullets and bombs. And everyone had his own truth. But the differences among these truths will be diminished, [...] if we manage to show the facts before we attempt to interpret them.” (7)

This statement implies that ‘truth’ is conceptualized as the interpretation of facts, but that the prevalence of different ‘truths’ makes it difficult to establish one shared ‘truth’. The most one can therefore do is minimize the differences between these ‘truths’ by ‘showing the facts’. A slightly different perspective is expressed in another article, commenting on “the importance of a common narrative in the region and of achieving consensus on the key facts” (29). The article states:

“He added that in his opinion, such consensus did not preclude respect for and understanding of the different versions of the truth, which every ethnic group held, because that too was one of the aspects of reconciliation. However, a common position on the key facts of the events that took place during the wars in the 1990s must be established, he stressed.” (29)

In short, this statement argues that differences between ‘truths’ should be respected, as opposed to ‘diminished’, and that the establishment of a shared narrative concerning ‘key facts’ should take priority. Along similar lines, another article discusses “the importance of making a distinction between the interpretations of the recent past and the establishment of irrefutable facts” (46). This difference is important, since ‘fact-finding’ is “the only way to put different approaches, different points of departure and interests ‘face to face’ and begin to overcome misunderstandings” (46). According to the article, this focus on establishing facts “does not mean, however, that we should give up comparing discrepancies and agreements; even if we are unable to present an agreed view of the events, we at least need to know and incorporate in educational programmes the awareness that there are different interpretations” (46). This implies that although RECOM should be focused on establishing ‘irrefutable facts’, different interpretations, or ‘truths’, should also be considered and compared.

What these articles and statements have in common is that they differentiate between ‘truth’ or interpretation and ‘facts’, representing ‘truth’ as the object of different interpretations or competing narratives, while ‘facts’ are somehow ‘undeniable’ or ‘irrefutable’ and can therefore result in consensus and ‘overcoming misunderstandings’. Furthermore, the representation of different approaches to competing truths also means that the discourse does not offer one uniform approach to addressing these truths. Different statements either promote awareness, comparing differences, diminishing differences or respecting different truths. This implies that dealing with competing narratives is a difficult or complex task, since the subjects contributing to the discourse have not

reached consensus on how to address this issue. Alternatively, facts can be ‘uncovered’ or ‘collected’, and must be established before ‘meaningful interpretation’ is even possible, representing the more straightforward nature of the task. The nature of the task, however, is not the only explanation for RECOM’s focus on establishing facts.

4.3.2.3 Competing narratives: manipulation and denial

Another explanation for this focus on ‘facts’ can be found by examining statements about ‘facts’ in the context of competing narratives. These narratives are represented as a pressing issue by a number of statements, painting a picture of the contentious terrain in which the Initiative for RECOM operates. One article states that “the lack of reliable facts about the victims is continually used for political manipulation, nationalist promotion, hatred and intolerance” (37). Along similar lines, another article comments on the absence of ‘elementary facts’ about the wars, stating that “[t]his means that the basic facts remain open not merely to interpretation, but to ideological fantasizing” (42). Consequently, some politicians “have been in power for years on the back of endless manipulation of the facts and victims” (40). Similarly addressing nationalist politicians, another article states that “if they have to talk about the recent past, they talk about it in terms of their own ‘truth’” (28). It is therefore argued that “we [have] a problem with institutionalized interpretations of history, and that everyone remain[s] shut in their own exclusivist interpretation, not only of the war but, what [is] even more problematic, of victims’ numbers as well” (12). The corresponding narratives are described as a “fantasy world, where ‘our guys were right, they were wrong’” (42). This is expanded on by the statement that “[t]oday, we hear from all sides that ‘there was murder, pillaging, and crimes committed by our side, but they were sporadic, it wasn’t systemic’. This gets repeated over and over again” (42). According to the article, in order to breach this “emotionally underpinned nationalistic – or patriotic – psychological blockade” (42), first “a cognitive blockade (ignorance of facts) must be broken through” (42).

In order to reach this objective, the Initiative for RECOM “was launched so that the facts about victims would finally be identified and accepted by all parties and cannot be denied anymore” (37). Along similar lines, another article states that “[a]nyone who denies the need to set up RECOM therefore denies The Hague judgments, the facts established about the genocide, the circumstances under which both civilians and combatants suffered...” (40). The need to counter this denial is legitimized by referring to the possibility of recurrence of conflict. In line with this argument, one article states:

“If the region does not deal with the past, forgetting the past and the recurrence of conflict represents a real danger. Manipulation of individual victims, victim numbers and the scale of atrocities could draw the region into new clashes, and such practices must be countered with facts.” (1)

Along similar lines, another article states:

“The process of overcoming the past represents a painful and long-lasting process, which begins with dealing with historical facts that one cannot run away from, which cannot be denied and which must not be forgotten in order to avoid a long-lasting spiral of crimes and conflicts.” (49)

It can therefore be argued that the Initiative for RECOM's discourse promotes the view that the lack of 'reliable' or 'elementary' facts has resulted in political manipulation and denial, which may lead to renewed violence. In order to prevent this, these basic facts must therefore first be established.

In short, this analysis points to contradicting statements regarding 'truth' and 'interpretation', indicating the complexity of these concepts and corresponding objectives. On the one hand, 'truth' is represented as the 'meaningful interpretation' of facts, reflecting RECOM's 'ultimate goal'. On the other hand, however, the concept of 'truth' is also related to competing nationalistic interpretations of the past, representing the contentious terrain in which the Initiative operates, and contributing to the possibility of recurrence of violence. Within this context, facts are represented as 'undeniable' or 'irrefutable', representing the counterweight to denial and manipulation, and providing the basis for reaching consensus and 'overcoming misunderstandings'. Based on these findings, it can therefore be argued that the discourse largely focusses on establishing facts, since it represents an important and relatively straightforward or manageable first step in addressing more complex issues regarding interpretation of the past. Thus, facts-finding, representing the objective dimension of RECOM's work, will shape the basis on which the confrontation regarding competing 'truths' must eventually play out. The primary representation of RECOM as a fact-finding commission, however, implies that this complex task is left to other actors.

4.3.3 Narrative discourse

According to the analysis, Narrative discourse is primarily focused on 'Suffering', followed by 'Memory', 'Testimony', 'Voice of victims' and 'Emotions' (see Appendix 2.3.5). This translates into a focus on specific Narrative concepts and practices. Taken together, these codes make up almost two-third of the coded elements belonging to Narrative discourse, and therefore form the focal point of this thematic analysis.

Codes referring to Narrative objectives represent a minor portion, approximately one-sixth of the elements related to Narrative discourse (see Appendix 2.3.5). They point to the theorized impact of truth-telling, including 'Remembrance', 'Catharsis' and 'Individual healing'. Since each of these codes is only used a few times in the research units, they will not be incorporated in the analysis of dominant patterns of statements. According to the literature, however, the practice of truth-telling is a dominant representation in restorative justice discourses due to its assumed contribution to individual healing and catharsis, derived from Western memory culture focused on remembrance. It is therefore remarkable that these objectives are relatively underrepresented in the research units. The dominance of concepts related to individual experiences of the conflict, over individual healing after the conflict, implies that the discourse might relate representations of individual experiences to other objectives than healing. By examining the statements made about these experiences and corresponding practices, this analysis aims to uncover the purpose of Narrative discourse in the research units.

The thematic analysis of statements indicates that references to Narrative Concepts and Practices are primarily made within the contexts of: dealing with the past as a painful but necessary process, providing a platform for victims, and Social discourse (see Appendix 2.3.7 for the data used in this analysis).

4.3.3.1 *Dealing with the past as a painful but necessary process*

Narrative Concepts and Practices are frequently deployed to represent dealing with the past as a painful or difficult process. The underlying assumption is expressed in a statement that discusses the negative impact of remembrance:

“Since we avoid the truth in order to reduce conflict, every society lives on a whole series of ‘useful lies’. This becomes further complicated in postwar periods, since far more profound emotions are at work, there is a larger number of people whose feelings are hurt, and therefore the question logically arises of why the truth matters to us, why turn back towards the past, wouldn’t it be better to forget everything that has happened – since remembrance (and organized remembrance in particular) re-opens old wounds and causes so many new ones.” (42)

The dominance of this critical perspective in the research units is shown by a number of other statements, arguing that “[t]ruth is painful” (16), “[t]he process of overcoming the past represents a painful and long-lasting process” (49), and “we all tend to suppress some memories: as if something that happened never really happened...” (16). Along similar lines, another article discusses a ceremony dedicated to memorialization and argues that it led to “[t]rauma instead of catharsis” (34). These statements reflect the view that it is painful to face the past and that it *might* be easier or ‘better’ to forget or suppress these memories. This view is also reflected in the question: “Can people forget and overcome a violent past filled with so much suffering and build a shared and peaceful future?” (14). The formulation of this question implies that ‘overcoming’ the past is related to ‘forgetting’ and that this possibly results in a ‘shared and peaceful future’.

This does not mean, however, that RECOM’s discourse promotes ‘forgetting’ as an objective. One article discusses the need for “willingness to tackle the painful issue of the inherited traumas from 2001” (41). Along similar lines, another article states that “processes such as the Initiative for RECOM, are “the best proof that we still have the strength and courage to fight our own difficult experiences.”” (6). These statements imply that, although ‘difficult’ or ‘painful’, traumas and experiences cannot be forgotten, but must be ‘tackled’ or ‘fought’. The view that forgetting is not a desirable objective is supported by the dominance of references to ‘memory’. The introductory article of the first issue of *The Voice* states that “responsibility, the need for truth, reconciliation and memory are social priorities” (1). Along similar lines, other articles address issues of “reflection and concern about the fate of memory” (3), funding for “memory preservation” (44), “[t]he need to research the events that marked the 20th century and preserve the memory of them” (44), and the success of an event titled “International Cooperation for Memory” (5). Based on these statements, it can therefore be argued that the Initiative for RECOM represents practices concerning memory as important but painful, implying that they serve another purpose than individual healing.

4.3.3.2 *Providing a platform for victims?*

As discussed in the introduction of this section, providing a platform to victims is indirectly expressed as one of RECOM’s functions. This function becomes apparent in the introductory article of the first issue of *The Voice*, stating that “RECOM will be a platform for the victims” (1). This function is explained by stating that “[t]he Voice disseminates the voice of victims” (1), and that “[e]very issue brings testimonies of victims” (1). These testimonies are presented under the heading “The Voice of Victims” (8, 17, 27, 35 & 47), indicating a focus on allowing ‘victims’ to share their stories.

What becomes apparent after examining these testimonies, however, is that they are primarily provided by family members of the deceased. One article provides three testimonies by family members of missing persons (8), while three other articles provide witness statements by family

members of killed persons (27, 35 & 47). One of these articles relays the testimony of Shyhrete Berisha, “one of the three survivors of the massacre of more than forty Albanian women, children and men of the Berisha family in Suva Reka” (27), about “how she had lost her husband, four children and forty members of her extended family in an attack by the Serbian police” (27). The other articles provide Misko Deverdzic’s testimony, about how he “lost his father Rados” (35), and Marica Šeatović’s testimony, about when her husband was killed (47). The only testimony provided by a direct victim is the “heartbreaking testimony of Smail Durakovic” (17), about how he was “detained in the camps in Susica and Batkovic” (17). This implies that testimonies by family members, about killing and enforced disappearance, are more central to RECOM’s discourse than testimonies by the actual victims of other types of crimes. These findings therefore support the findings regarding the level of inquiry, largely focused on investigating the killed and missing.

References to family members are made in a number of other statements, implying that they are important representatives of the ‘voice of victims’. One article states that RECOM represents an opportunity “to hear finally the voice of survivors and families of victims, to allow them to publicly express their suffering, to hear them directly and not through mediators” (37). Along similar lines, another article focusses on family members by stating that “[t]he most reasonable voice comes from the victims’ families, who even in moments of mourning, have preserved sound mind and the ability to differentiate between good and evil, between the individual and the ethnic group” (41). The attention paid to family members is in part explained by another article, stating that “through their life narratives, victims and their relatives witness and condemn the crimes” (17). This implies that the purpose of testifying concerns the ‘witnessing’ and ‘condemning’ of crimes, as opposed to the Narrative objective of individual healing. Furthermore, these findings indicate that the Initiative for RECOM primarily focusses on the voices of relatives, providing them with the opportunity to share the stories of victims who no longer have a voice of their own. It can therefore be argued that RECOM is essentially represented as a platform *about* victims, as opposed to a platform *for* victims.

4.3.3.3 Victims and memory in Social discourse

The purposes of truth-telling become apparent when examining the use of references to Narrative Concepts and Practices in the context of Social discourses. For instance, one article states that “the memory of crimes committed by totalitarian regimes should be “a collective memory, shared and promoted...”” (44). Along similar lines, another article also refers to constructing a shared narrative and states that “[i]n this true story, victims should be the focus, because highlighting barbarity through the suffering and the fate of victims will help communities to experience more intensely the dark historical period through which they lived” (18). Similarly, another article states:

“if the idea of reconciliation was to come to life in the region, the people must receive the information about the war from someone they trust more than they trust the ICTY and national courts. Political institutions and the media were not trusted. Citizens believed victims first of all, those individuals whom they saw as similar to themselves. They wanted to hear “personal stories,” to gain an insight into other people’s feelings.” (6)

This focus on communities, or the public, is also expressed in a number of other statements, which will be discussed in-depth in the section on Social discourse. What can be argued based on these statements, however, is that personal memories or stories are mainly utilized for their perceived impact on the public, including shared memory, awareness, and trust and understanding.

In conclusion, regarding RECOM's conception of 'truth', this analysis implies that the initiative does not consider 'truth' to be an all-powerful and purely positive objective, able to cure the ails of society and individual victims alike. Alternatively, it can be argued that RECOM's discourse recognizes the construction of 'truth' as a painful process, which might 're-open old wounds'. This view differs from the restorative justice paradigm as discussed in the literature, which often envisions truth commission work as a cathartic and healing experience. RECOM's representation of Narrative discourse thus corresponds with the perspective of critical scholars, arguing that participation in a truth commission's proceedings can be a re-traumatizing experience, and that truth-telling is not therapy. Furthermore, it can also be argued that concepts such as 'suffering' and 'testimony' are represented as components of 'truth' in the Initiative for RECOM's discourse, since they effectively convey 'truth' to the public. These findings therefore imply that Narrative 'truth' is primarily deployed as a vehicle in promoting RECOM's Social dimension. This interpretation is supported by the literature, arguing that public hearings of victims' stories are often organized to have a powerful impact on the audience, aiming to contribute to a number of social objectives.

4.3.4 Social discourse

According to the analysis, Social discourse is primarily focused on 'Dialogue', followed by 'Outreach', 'Public hearings' and 'Education' (see Appendix 2.3.4). This translates into a focus on Social Practices, making up over half of the elements referring to Social discourse. Social Objectives constitute the remaining elements, primarily focused on 'Legitimacy', 'Collective memory', 'Awareness' and 'Mutual understanding' in terms of element count and/or percentage of articles. While references to 'Dialogue' are most dominant, making up almost a fifth of the coded elements referring to Social discourse, the rest of these codes are relatively equally represented and will therefore be included in this analysis of statements.

The analysis of dominant patterns of statements indicates that references to Social discourse are primarily made within the contexts of: issues in the public sphere, and the importance of social practices (see Appendix 2.3.8 for the data used in this analysis).

4.3.4.1 *Issues in the public sphere*

While the analysis of Forensic discourse indicates a focus on competing narratives, Social discourse also addresses a range of other issues, including persisting ethnic tension and division, and a lack of public discussion and involvement.

In commenting on "the public sphere in Macedonia" (26), one article states that "that ethnic divisions have only deepened from 2001 onwards, while the frustrations have been left untreated" (26). The article states that this has led to the eruption of "uncensored hate speech", while "participants in the public debate often do not even recognize the cultural and symbolic violence" (26). It is therefore proposed that "Macedonia needs an honest and open discussion between its segregated communities" (26). Along similar lines, another article comments on Macedonia's "consociational (power-sharing) model of political co-existence" and states that "ethnic divisions are not only constitutionalized and institutionalized but have even deepened the existing cleavages in society" (41). Consequently, "new generations have grown up in an atmosphere where there is a lower level of mutual understanding than that when their parents were growing up" (41). On a regional level, it is stated that "post-war generations are being shaped by conflicting narratives", aided by the educational system that emphasizes "the differences between nations in the region" (6). Consequently, there is "no universally accepted version of the events from the 1990's", due to a lack of "public debate in the region about the crimes committed in the recent past" (6).

Regarding the events of the conflicts, public discussion and involvement is argued to be negatively impacted by a number of actors. One article states that public discourse in Macedonia is

characterized by “a specific (and traditional) form of reconciliation through forgetfulness” (26). The article argues that this silence persisted after “the parliamentary majority enabled the remaining war crimes court cases, to be closed” (26). Consequently, “[t]he issue of dealing with the past had never been high on the public agenda, but has now been completely removed from it, by a single political decree” (26). Also referring to the context of Macedonia, another article therefore states that “a lack of transparency” during political negotiations “de facto resulted in the elimination of any civic initiative and citizens’ participation” (41). Similarly, another article comments on Serbia’s Monument Group, “which arose from an idea to mark the suffering, and name the victims and perpetrators of crimes” (34). However, “[i]nstead of its becoming part of the public discourse, the idea was removed from the agenda and offered instead to war veterans, invalids and associations of victims’ families” (34). On a regional level, another article addresses not the political failure but the media’s inability to inspire public debate, stating that “the media should publish the facts instead of hiding the atrocities that caused so much suffering” (6). Along similar lines, another article states that “the room for public debate and deliberations, without which democratic decision-making is a pretty meaningless procedure, has been drastically reduced by the commercialisation and sensationalization of the media, even where it is no longer affected by direct political intervention” (46).

Furthermore, the role of the ICTY is also related to social practices. One article points to “the failure of the ICTY’s Outreach Program to explain the judicial procedure to the public in the region, and its failure to justify the court’s rulings”, which could have “prevented local political manipulation of the Court’s verdicts” (29). Along similar lines, another article states that this international justice mechanism has not “properly engaged with and educated the public on important issues such as criminal code usage and sentencing measures” (45). Additionally, another article states:

“The trials before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and those before national courts in the region, have failed to initiate a broader public debate about war crimes. In the region, trials are not even perceived as a legitimate tool in establishing the full truth about the crimes.” (1)

It is therefore proposed that “RECOM has the opportunity to educate and provoke discussion, where the legal pursuit of justice has sometimes left society, victims and other groups confused” (45).

In short, it can be argued that the Initiative for RECOM’s Social discourse highlights specific issues in contemporary post-Yugoslav societies, including ethnic divisions and diminished mutual understanding, a lack of public participation and dialogue concerning the past, and a failure by the ICTY, media and political actors to educate or inspire debate. This dominance of social issues in the research units implies that they are used to legitimize the Initiative for RECOM’s functions and objectives regarding the Social dimension.

4.3.4.2 The importance of Social practices

Firstly, as the most dominant code in Social discourse, the Initiative for RECOM promotes public dialogue. In discussing the importance of this practice, articles refer to “opening up public debate about the recent past” (31), “combat historical revisionism and improve social dialogue” (44), “the restoration of [...] dialogue” (49), and “a strong and dynamic [...] dialogue” (49). Commitment to this practice is shown by the initiative’s own activities, including participation in an event called “The Fifth International Week of Dialogue and Encounter” (5), and describing the birth of the initiative as “part of a dialogue among civil society organizations” (10).

The importance of dialogue is expressed in relation to a number of objectives. In a general sense, “public discussion about the events of the war” is defined as “one of the essential elements of postwar justice” (29). Similarly general, one article comments on the conflicts and states: “Let’s talk

about them in order not to make the same mistake again" (11). Another article addresses the importance of entering "a phase of peaceful and reasoned discussion", representing "the basis on which the final confrontation with the past should play out" (23). These statements thus refer to the importance of dialogue in relation to justice, non-recurrence, and dealing with the past, which are general objectives of Transitional Justice, as opposed to specific Social Objectives. Other statements are more specific, relating dialogue to "recognizing our own mistakes" (23), or "role reversal" (11). Regarding role reversal, the article defines "the most important remedies on the road to peace" as "[d]irect communication – dialogue, opportunity and ability to express oneself, reversal of roles as a route to understanding" (11). Furthermore, the article also states that "we must [...] try to understand the reality of the 'other side,' because role reversal is a means for accepting the past" (11). This article thus expresses the view that dialogue, incorporating role reversal, leads to mutual understanding and acceptance. Related to understanding the 'other side', a number of statements address overcoming divisions. One statement argues that by fostering "a public debate regarding the role of violence in the 1990s conflict", RECOM will contribute to "the erosion of borders and divisions created by the violence and conflict" (45). Furthermore, the article states:

"In turning the focus on victims and fostering public debate, the RECOM initiative has the possibility to aid the destabilisation of nationalist discourses of statehood and belonging within the region which could ultimately lead to a longer-lasting public dialogue." (45)

This 'longer-lasting public dialogue' would involve "citizens to not only examine, but to collectively establish, a shared narrative of the past which is important in the process of achieving a stable peace" (45). This objective is repeated in other articles, addressing "the importance of a common narrative in the region and of achieving consensus on the key facts" (29), "the promotion of shared values and shared memories" (44), and the creation of a "a collective memory, shared and promoted" (44). In short, it can therefore be argued that dialogue is represented as an important objective in the research units, due to its represented contribution to a wide range of objectives, including promoting mutual understanding, eroding divisions, constructing a 'collective memory', and contributing to a 'stable peace'.

However, dialogue is not the only practice represented in the research units. According to the analysis, the Initiative for RECOM also focusses on the importance of outreach, public hearings and education. Regarding outreach, one of RECOM's expressed functions is described as "publishing, and presenting its Final Report in a manner that will facilitate broad access to the Report" (4). Other statements also refer to this task as "reporting on the periods in the recent past when the most serious crimes were committed" (14), "[p]ublic disclosure of facts about the crimes" (15), and "to collect and publish the facts about war crimes and all other human rights violations" (15). In commenting on this "openness in [...] discovery" (46), one article states that it provides "additional legitimacy" (46) to a commission's work. Along similar lines, another article addresses criminal justice institutions and states that they "establish their legitimacy within local communities through public outreach activities" (45). These activities "may include public seminars, online archives of testimony or networks of civil society organisations", and "are essential, if not core, to the establishment of post-war truth and justice" (45). Based on these statements, it can be argued that outreach is represented as a vital activity in achieving a truth commission's general objectives, truth and justice, by publishing the facts and thereby providing public legitimacy to the commission.

Regarding public hearings, one of RECOM's expressed functions is "[h]olding public hearings of victims and other persons about war crimes and gross violations of human rights" (4). Along similar lines, other articles state that "[p]ublic hearings of victims are an essential mechanism and one of the main goals for future RECOM" (17), and that "public testimony [...] would be an integral part of RECOM"

(5). Commitment to this practice is indicated by the activities of the initiative, including organizing the “public hearing of victims” (17) or “public testimony of victims” (35, 47) during the “the Third Regional Forum for the establishment of the facts about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia” (17, 35) and “The Fourth Regional Forum for Transitional Justice” (47). Regarding the related objectives, one article states that “[p]ublic testimony brings into focus and [provides] public attention [to] the often forgotten victims” (17). It is stated that “[c]itizens believed victims first of all” and that “[t]hey wanted to hear “personal stories,” to gain an insight into other people’s feelings” (6). Furthermore, it is stated that “public testimony [...] would have a positive effect because it would create a strong emotional reaction, which would effectively make the audience aware of the sheer horror of the crimes” (5). The importance of awareness is supported by a number of other statements, referring to ‘awareness-raising’ (44), the “duty to [...] raise the awareness of the community” (23). In short, it can be argued that public hearings are represented as an important practice, since they focus public attention on the victims and their stories, resulting in awareness and understanding regarding ‘other people’s feelings’.

Finally, regarding education, one article states that “there was no alternative to RECOM, in terms of a mechanism at a regional level that could offer officially accepted facts which would then be used in the region’s educational systems” (31). Another article therefore comments on ‘Article 45 of RECOM’s Draft Statute’, which proposes “the mechanisms which will help integrate the established facts into the educational systems” in the region”, as a means of changing the “historical narratives of groups involved in the conflict” (6). Along similar lines, other statements address “getting through to the educational system” (46), and “the necessity of a history curriculum based on objective facts” (29). Based on these statements, it can therefore be argued that representations regarding the Social practice of education support the results regarding Forensic discourse, implying that the Initiative for RECOM focusses on establishing ‘objective’ facts in order to eventually inspire dealing with competing ‘truths’.

In short, this analysis implies that Social ‘truth’ is conceptualized as a shared and legitimate ‘truth’, represented as a ‘collective memory’ or ‘consensus on the key facts’, constructed in dialogue and aided by outreach, public hearings and education. These practices are represented as important since they are able to promote mutual understanding and help overcome ethnic divisions. RECOM’s role, however, is primarily represented as organizing public hearings, publishing the established facts, and thereby ‘provoking discussion’. It can therefore be argued that, as opposed to *actively guiding* the construction of Social ‘truth’, RECOM is focused on disseminating Forensic ‘truth’, or objective facts, and Narrative ‘truth’, or testimony during public hearings, in order to *inspire* the construction of Social ‘truth’.

4.3.5 Restorative discourse

According to the analysis, Restorative discourse is primarily focused on ‘Reconciliation’, representing over a quarter of the coded elements in this category (see Appendix 2.3.3). Other dominant codes referring to an ‘imagined future’ include ‘Regional cooperation’, ‘Non-recurrence of violence’ and ‘European Integration’. Together, these Restorative objectives related to ‘Reconciliation’ dominate over other Restorative objectives and practices focused on victims. Although references to ‘Reparations’ and ‘Forgiveness’ are relatively frequent, references to for instance ‘Restoring victim’s dignity’, ‘Acknowledgement’ and ‘Apology’ are underrepresented in the research units. This implies that RECOM’s Restorative discourse largely focusses on society or the Former Yugoslavia as a whole, as opposed to focusing on objectives related to victims. This analysis is supported by the results regarding Narrative discourse, which also imply that victim-related concepts and practices primarily serve social purposes. In order to examine the main purposes of Restorative discourse, this analysis of statements therefore focusses on ‘Reconciliation’ and its related objectives.

Another interesting result worth mentioning, however, concerns Restorative concepts related to a 'useable past'. According to the literature, representations of a 'useable past' that contribute to an 'imagined future', such as reconciliation, can sometimes contradict and overshadow 'objective' or Forensic 'truth'. The analysis of codes, however, indicates that, in comparison to references concerning 'facts', references to a 'usable past' represent a relatively minor portion of the coded elements (See Appendix 2.3.2 & 2.3.3). These elements primarily include statements about 'Barbarism & Horror', followed by 'Harmonious coexistence' and 'Cycle of violence'. The idea of 'Harmonious coexistence' is for instance expressed in the statement that "[w]e used to live so well, so nicely together as friends in the neighbourhood, and then war broke out" (42), while the 'Cycle of violence' is addressed by a statement arguing that "[t]he violence emerges over and over again, because the bloodshed from previous armed conflicts has not been dealt with properly and thoroughly" (11). The presence of these conflicting 'useable pasts' in the research units implies that the Initiative is mindful of different views on the past, but does not focus on constructing one specific 'useable past' as part of its own narrative. The more dominant code, 'Barbarism & Horror', includes statements referring to for instance "the horrors of our common recent past" (1), "the sheer horror of the crimes" (5), and "our last collective descent into barbarism" (18). These statements can be seen as a moral judgements concerning the crimes, which is one of the main purposes of a truth commission according to the literature. Moral judgement, however, differs from constructing an alternative narrative on the past, meaning that representing these crimes as 'horrible' does not contradict or limit the construction of a 'factual' record. Based on the research units, it can therefore be argued that the Initiative for RECOM does not limit the construction of Forensic truth in favor of constructing a 'useable past'.

As discussed, however, this analysis of statements primarily focusses on 'Reconciliation' and related objectives. According to the analysis, statements regarding 'Reconciliation' are primarily made within the contexts of: reconciliation as a social process, reconciliation as a political process (focused on regional cooperation and European integration), and reconciliation and truth (see Appendix 2.3.9 for the data used in this analysis).

4.3.5.1 Reconciliation as a social process

The introductory article of the first issue of *The Voice* states that "responsibility, the need for truth, reconciliation and memory are social priorities" (1). The social nature of the process is defined in another article, discussing what reconciliation entails. The article states:

"First we need to say who should be reconciled with whom. Is it a reconciliation on a personal level? Is it on the level of ethnicity or society? Reconciliation involves both recognition of the crime and an apology for it. But reconciliation *must* be preceded by trust between people, between communities and then at the level of society." (6)

This statements addresses 'recognition' and 'apology' as components of reconciliation, referring to Restorative discourse centered on victims, but highlights the importance of 'trust'. By referring to 'trust between people, between communities and then at the level of society' as a necessary precondition for reconciliation, this statement represents reconciliation as a social objective.

In referring to RECOM's role in prioritizing reconciliation, another article states that "it has the power to allow this region to finally begin a social, rather than petty political reconciliation process" (9). This direct reference to the difference between reconciliation as a social or a political process is repeated by the statement:

"Peace initiatives such as RECOM, which allow dealing with the past and work towards reconciliation that transcends nations and countries, are carried out by individuals in civil

society so that the pursuit of justice is not stifled by politicians and their individual interests.” (11)

Reconciliation is thus represented as a process best carried out by civil society actors as opposed to political actors. This view is supported by statements involving critique on political approaches to reconciliation in the case of Macedonia. This political ‘strategy’ is characterized as “a specific (and traditional) form of reconciliation through forgetfulness”, which has resulted in an “imaginary reconciliation [where] the political elites refuse to see that ethnic divisions have only deepened” (26). It is therefore argued that “Macedonia needs an honest and open discussion between its segregated communities” (26). It can therefore be argued that this article represents Macedonia’s political process of reconciliation as an ‘imaginary reconciliation’, implying a lack of ‘real’ reconciliation, which can be resolved by means of the social practice of dialogue.

A specific type of dialogue is represented in statements regarding the “involvement of religious communities in the process of reconciliation” (12). In commenting on the divisions between Serbs and Croats, it is stated that “the issue of reconciliation between the two nations linked by historical and cultural ties must be followed by a strong and dynamic ecumenical dialogue between the two sister churches” (49). This article describes a visit between the two churches and states that it “represents the start of a new phase in the relationship between the two largest branches of Christianity in the region of the former Yugoslavia, and sends a strong message of reconciliation” (49). It can therefore be argued that religious leaders are represented as a specific type of social actor, able to inspire reconciliation between ‘religious communities’ by means of ‘ecumenical dialogue’.

In short, reconciliation as a social process is primarily represented as a process involving dialogue and building trust, best carried out by social actors as opposed to political actors. However, this does not mean that the political sphere of reconciliation is not addressed in the initiative’s discourse.

4.3.5.2 Reconciliation as a political process

Firstly, reconciliation in the political sphere is related to a number of issues. In addressing a statement made by Serbia’s president that denies the Srebrenica genocide, one article states that “such rhetoric is a step backwards, aggravates the victims’ suffering and threatens the fragile process of reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia” (50). It is therefore stated that the Council of Europe will “follow the work of the President of Serbia in the area of the reconciliation in the region with particular concern” (50). Also, in addressing the role of the European Commission, the article states that the Srebrenica genocide “would be placed on the agenda for a forthcoming meeting between Barroso and President Nikolić, together with the wider issue of “reconciliation in the region”” (50). These statements imply that, although certain political discourses ‘threaten’ reconciliation, reconciliation is nonetheless a topic that belongs on the political agenda.

This representation is supported by a number of other statements, regarding a lack of attention on reconciliation in the political sphere. An article titled ‘Reconciliation as a Political Taboo’ (28) states that “the voices of the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia, Boris Tadic and Ivo Josipovic, have gone silent on the subject”, and that “[o]bviously, the theme of reconciliation is no longer a political priority for either of them”. Along similar lines, regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is stated that “it turns out that none of the politicians in that state has enough time to deal with reconciliation, even if the topic is in fact crucial to the future of the country” (28). Due to the critical tone of the article, these statements imply that politicians need to pay attention to the topic of reconciliation.

In supporting this view, another article addresses politicians who *do* pay attention to reconciliation. The article states that “[t]he Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, once again offered his support for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission that would, as he said, seek

to heal the wounds of the conflicts in the region” (38). Furthermore, it is states that “Thaçi said that the only way to achieve reconciliation was to integrate Serbs living in the north with the rest of Kosovo” (38). In paraphrasing the opinion of ‘the opposition’, however, the article also states that “[b]efore reconciliation, Serbia should ask for forgiveness for the serious crimes and genocide committed in Kosovo, something that has not been done so far” (38). Along similar lines, another member of the opposition is quoted, stating that “[w]e can talk about reconciliation only after all the war criminals are punished and reparations are made to victims”, since “Kosovo and its people could not be reconciled with Serbia unless Serbia was held to account for the harm it had caused” (38). This article thus addresses different political perspectives on reconciliation, indicating that the post-conflict political landscape is characterized by diverse or opposing priorities. Furthermore, by addressing different political perspectives, this article implies that the opinions of politicians regarding reconciliation must be considered, since they shape the relationships between states in the region.

The importance of these relationships in the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse is highlighted by the relative dominance of references to ‘Regional cooperation’. In commenting on “the successful mediation of the international community”, one article states that “cooperation between Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia had not existed twenty years ago and [...] that regional reconciliation of the peoples of these countries was to be of utmost importance for improved future cooperation” (39). Along similar lines, another article states that “confronted with the request of the international community to establish regional cooperation, the leading politicians in the region agreed that joining the victims together could lead to reconciliation which they, notably the Presidents of Croatia and Serbia, had been advocating since 2010” (36). These statements indicate that the objectives of ‘regional cooperation’ and ‘reconciliation’ are linked in discussions on the region’s future.

These statements also address the influence of the international community, which is discussed by a number of other statements regarding the ‘Enlargement Strategy of the European Commission’ (2, 10). It is stated that this strategy relates “Serbia’s “support [for] the RECOM initiative on reconciliation”” to “the importance of regional cooperation and good neighborly relations” (2). Furthermore, it is stated that the EC “carefully monitors activities like the Initiative for RECOM that enhance regional cooperation and reconciliation, since they are essential for the stability and European integration” (10), also referred to as “membership of the European Union” (2). Similarly, in paraphrasing the ‘High Representative of the international community in Bosnia & Herzegovina’, it is also argued that “[r]econciliation in the region “is possible and must be possible” and is of great importance to the progress of the region and the security of the EU” (39). The importance of the EU in relation to the region’s future is represented by a number of other statements, referring for instance to “the progress the Western Balkan countries [...] had made toward their EU membership” (2), “[t]he prospect of EU accession” (11), and “[b]elieving in a bright future (once the country joins [...] the EU)” (26). These statements imply that regional cooperation and European integration are important components of the Initiative for RECOM’s constructed representation of an ‘imagined future’, supported or shaped by the represented objectives of the international community.

4.3.5.3 Reconciliation and truth

In aiming for this ‘imagined future’ where people, communities and states are reconciled, ‘truth’ is represented as the way to achieve it. In addressing “uncovering the facts and finding out the truth” as RECOM’s ‘ultimate goal’, one article states:

“The knowledge of what really happened is a prerequisite for everything that comes later: reconciliation and cooperation, building new and better relations among the peoples and nations in our region. Because there is no alternative to the truth.” (1)

This implies that relationships in the Former Yugoslavia cannot be improved without addressing ‘facts’ and ‘truth’. Along similar lines, another article states that “[t]o achieve reconciliation, cooperation, progress, and to be free from fear, the truth is a prerequisite” (10). Similarly, this article addresses the need to “to transform our societies by way of the truth, and thus create conditions to live together in peace again. This, ultimately, leads to reconciliation.” (10). More specifically, another article states that “establishing the facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights, and establishing the fate of missing persons from the wars of 1991-2001 in the former Yugoslavia was extremely important for the process of dealing with the past and reconciliation in the region” (13). RECOM’s task is therefore described as “presenting as many indisputable facts as possible”, in order to resolve “the issue of reconciliation” (6). Along similar lines, it is stated that “[t] The task of public advocacy is to persuade the politicians in the region that peace-building and reconciliation are possible only if the facts about war crimes and serious violations of human rights are established and only if a list of all victims is compiled” (19).

It can therefore be argued that these statements, representing “the importance of facts and reconciliation” (16), highlight the main findings of this analysis. According to the Initiative for RECOM’s discourse, in order to inspire both social and political reconciliation and cooperation, contributing to the ‘imagined future’ of European integration, the facts about past wars must first be established. This implies that the establishment of RECOM as a fact-finding commission is legitimized by representing ‘facts’ as a necessary precondition for achieving this ‘imagined future’.

4.3.6 Answering the sub-question

In conclusion, it can be argued that the Initiative for RECOM’s different discourses reproduce a variety of related objectives and corresponding practices related to truth-seeking. The stage for this construction of ‘truth’ is set by representing a variety of issues that shape the post-conflict societies of the former Yugoslavia. According to the research units, the region’s public sphere is plagued by ethnic divisions, exclusivist interpretations of the past shaped by political manipulation and denial, and a failure by the media and the ICTY to educate the population and inspire debate. Consequently, it is argued that the region has not properly dealt with its violent past, resulting in the possibility of recurrence of violence.

Within this context, RECOM aims to ‘provoke discussion’ by ‘turning focus on victims’ through public hearings, publishing ‘undeniable’ facts, and aiding reform of the region’s educational systems. In turn, public dialogue is argued to contribute to mutual understanding between different parties, erode ‘borders and divisions’, destabilize nationalistic narratives, and ultimately result in the construction of a ‘shared narrative’ by the region’s citizens. According to the discourse, this process is needed to achieve a ‘stable peace’ and contribute to an imagined future, characterized by reconciliation, regional cooperation, and ultimately, membership of the European Union. The representations regarding this process are primarily shaped by a focus on establishing facts, provoking dialogue, and inspiring reconciliation, which represent the main signifying elements of the discourse. These findings imply that the construction of ‘truth’ is not conceptualized as an authoritative process, purely shaped by the commission, but rather as an essentially social process in which RECOM plays a facilitatory role. This interpretation is supported by the representation of RECOM as a fact-finding commission, focused on establishing facts as opposed to interpreting them, and thereby providing citizens with a basis on which they can construct a shared ‘truth’, which will contribute to reconciliation.

This represented approach can be explained by considering literature on ‘deliberative reconciliation’. This perspective on reconciliation is based on the assumption that the reconstruction of societies “along inclusive civic, as opposed to exclusive ethnic, lines” is possible, but only when “a reasoned exchange of arguments that considers views of others” takes place (Kostovicova, 2017, p.

159). In applying this perspective to the Initiative for RECOM's discourse, it can be argued that the construction of a shared 'truth' by means of dialogue represents the process of deliberation, which is needed to achieve RECOM's 'imagined future'. Based on this perspective, the construction of an authoritative or official 'truth' by RECOM would not contribute to reconciliation in the same manner, since it would limit the necessity for deliberation regarding the past. The interpretation that RECOM does not aim to construct an official 'truth' is supported by the representations regarding Forensic discourse, characterized by the statement that RECOM aims to establish 'undeniable facts', not an 'undeniable truth'. Furthermore, this also implies that RECOM prioritizes reconciliation and other future objectives over constructing 'truth'. This interpretation is supported by the literature on the discursive context, stating that in order to satisfy diverse interests, the Coalition for RECOM turned its focus on the future, as opposed to concentrating on the past (Rowen, 2017). In order to gain support for the establishment of RECOM, the Coalition's media campaign addressed people's "hopes for a better life", characterized by the desire to obtain EU membership (Rowen, 2017, p. 73). This explains the dominance of reference to European integration in the research units, which is represented as the possible outcome of improved cooperation and reconciliation.

This focus on the future, however, does not mean that RECOM does not address the past. Rather than constructing one 'truth', the discourse points to a focus on establishing facts as a necessary precondition for everything that 'comes later'. This interpretation of the findings can be explained by the literature on restorative justice discourse. According to the literature, this paradigm is firmly based on the assumption that without 'truth' about the past, or in this case facts, there can be no reconciliation (Espinosa et al., 2017). Based on this perspective, it can therefore be argued that RECOM's discourse is at least partly reproduces dominant discourses on restorative justice, legitimizing its existence by representing a positive relationship between facts and reconciliation.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Answering the main research question

This section answers the main research question, as discussed in the introduction of this report:

‘What conception of ‘truth’ is constructed by the Initiative for RECOM, concerning the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 until 2001 and their aftermath, and what are its implications?’

According to Andrieu (2010, p. 541), “the search for justice and a common ‘truth’ is often problematic and can have divisive consequences”. This notion seems to have a substantial impact on the Coalition’s discourse, producing three distinct but related conceptions of ‘truth’. The first concerns a complex understanding of ‘truth’, characterized by the recognition that different interpretations of the past contribute to competing ethno-nationalist versions of ‘truth’. This conflictive terrain is a frequently recurring theme in the discourse, indicating that ethnic divisions and nationalist politics largely shape the discursive context in which the Initiative for RECOM operates. The aim to bridge these divisions is conveyed by the dominance of representations regarding reconciliation, regional cooperation and European integration, representing both social and political conceptions of reconciliation. The partly political nature of this process is highlighted by the relative dominance of political subject positions in the discourse, related to both the European Union and the Western Balkan states. These subject positions support RECOM’s ambitious representation of the imagined future, surpassing narrow conceptions of reconciliation focused on non-recurrence of violence, and instead reflecting the desire of post-Yugoslav societies and states to obtain EU membership.

As an initiative born from civil society, however, it is hardly surprising that the Coalition’s discourse reproduces predominantly social assumptions regarding dealing with the past. These assumptions contribute to the second conception of ‘truth’, represented as a ‘shared truth’ constructed in dialogue. Supported by theory on deliberative reconciliation, it can be argued that the Coalition for RECOM represents reconciliation between the peoples of the region as a social objective that can only be achieved by means of public dialogue about the past. In order to achieve this objective, RECOM adopts a facilitatory role, focused on representations regarding establishing and disseminating facts, while the ‘meaningful interpretation’ of facts and corresponding construction of ‘shared truth’ is intended to play out in the public arena. The limited involvement of RECOM in this public process is highlighted by the lack of perspectives from ordinary citizens in shaping the Initiative’s discourse, indicating that public dialogue is intended to occur outside the sphere of RECOM’s work.

This interpretation is supported by the Coalition for RECOM’s third conception of ‘truth’, representing the narrative it aims to construct, which can be described as a narrow and factual ‘truth’. Representations regarding the level of inquiry, victim-related subject positions and Forensic truth translate into a largely victim-centric approach to establishing ‘undeniable facts’. This narrow conception of ‘truth’ primarily focusses on investigating the fate of the missing and establishing the names, circumstances of suffering and total number of victims. These representations can be interpreted as the aim to construct a non-divisive narrative, focused on representing all victims equally, as opposed to constructing a broader macro-truth focused on who or what was responsible for the outbreak of the conflicts. When considering the discursive context in which the Initiative for RECOM operates, there are a number of possible explanations for this conception of ‘truth’. Perhaps it is a response to the perceived failures of the ICTY, which arguably did not do enough to resolve the fate of the missing, and contributed to divisions by attributing individual responsibility to specific nationals.

Alternatively, it might be the result of a compromise with the political elites, some of whom do not want to see an official 'truth' established that can compete with their ethno-national versions of 'truth'. In order to gain the political support needed for the official establishment of RECOM, the Coalition might therefore have dismissed its initial objectives regarding macro-truth.

The motives behind this narrow conceptions of 'truth', however, are largely inconsequential, since they do not change the possible implications of the narrative. Although any transitional justice mechanism can have unforeseen consequences, as indicated by the case of the ICTY, the literature does offer a number of likely implications. According to the literature, truth commissions often produce narrow conceptions of victimhood due to a focus on specific crimes, meaning that those who identify themselves as victims but who are excluded from the official proceedings remain to feel marginalized (Mani, 2005; Leebaw, 2008). By predominantly focusing on the missing and deceased, the discourse therefore largely excludes people who were subjected to torture, destruction of property, rape, and a range of other violations. Furthermore, by adopting a victim-centric approach, the corresponding 'truth' constructed by commissions marginalizes the experiences and suffering of the general population (Young, 2004), and often fails to resonate with the majority of people within society (Andrieu, 2010), thereby failing to reshape public debate (Mamdani, 1996). Based on these views, it can therefore be argued that RECOM's focus on specific victims might not only marginalize the suffering of other victims and people who see themselves as 'survivors', but might also defeat one of its primary objectives, provoking dialogue and inspiring the construction of social 'truth'. Furthermore, by largely ignoring the macro-level of inquiry, truth commissions are unable to provide a valuable deeper understanding about the past, which is often what is most missing from transitional societies (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 42).

To end on a positive note, however, RECOM's narrow conception of 'truth' will likely result in the successful completion of its truth-seeking objectives. According to Hayner (2011), one of the main challenges truth commissions face is related to overextended mandates and unrealistic expectations, resulting in almost certain disappointment. It can therefore be argued that by focusing on collecting information about a select range of violations and finding missing persons, RECOM has constructed a more manageable mandate than most truth commissions. Whether this narrow and factual 'truth' is beneficial, and if so, beneficial to whom, remains to be seen. Maybe basic facts will indeed counter political manipulation, inspire public dialogue and contribute to reconciliation. Or perhaps RECOM has compromised its more profound conception of 'truth' in favor of a reconciled future that it cannot achieve.

5.2 Reflection

As discussed in the section on methodology, Critical Discourse Analysis is often used to establish possibilities for social change. In the context of this study, one might therefore argue that the Coalition for RECOM needs to pay more attention to the victims of crimes other than killing or enforced disappearance, actively involve citizens in the construction of its discourse, or expand its mandate to focus on a macro-truth that is more relevant to the majority of the region's populations. What has become apparent during the course of this study, however, is that there is no consensus on what truth-seeking can and must accomplish. While some scholars argue that 'objective truth' should be prioritized since reconciliation cannot be achieved by truth commissions alone, others warn against the divisive consequences of truth-seeking and thereby essentially prioritize its social impact. Furthermore, since the construction of 'truth' and its impact is highly contextual, general theories cannot always be assumed to apply. In considering the context of the former Yugoslavia as discussed in this study, it can be argued that it is characterized by issues, regarding the persistence of competing

narratives and the failure of the ICTY to diminish this competition. Based on these considerations, one can wonder if it is even possible to determine what a valuable or effective conception of 'truth' should incorporate. Without addressing what the peoples and states of the former Yugoslavia need in terms of 'truth', and what approach works in the region, it can be argued that this is impossible.

This study can therefore best be seen as an inventory of the diverse components of the Initiative for RECOM's discourse regarding 'truth'. It can be used as a basis for further research, examining the established representations of the discourse within a more profound examination of the region's truth-seeking context. By examining other, perhaps more local and small-scale, truth-seeking initiatives and their impact, one would be in a better position to assess the likely impact of RECOM's conception of 'truth'.

Consequently, this recommendation also addresses one of the limitations of this study. Based on the experience and knowledge of a Master student, the research process was primarily focused on constructing, revisiting, and extending the code scheme based on an ever expanding conceptual framework. In hindsight, this study could have been improved by restricting this framework to focus more closely on a limited number of concepts or discourses. By making the scope of this study less extensive, more time could have been spent on examining the findings in their constitutive context.

Furthermore, the research units, published in 2011 and 2012, were partly selected based on the assumption that the Coalition for RECOM had finished its consultation period in 2011, resulting in the establishment of its objectives and functions. The articles published relatively shortly thereafter were therefore analyzed to examine these functions and objectives and their relation to 'truth'. During the analysis, however, it became apparent that in this relatively short period of time, RECOM's objectives regarding macro-truth had already changed. Based on this finding, it can be argued that the evolution of RECOM's objectives over time, compared to the diversity of competing interests and corresponding developments in the region, would yield interesting results regarding the changing nature of conceptions of 'truth'.

The most relevant analysis by far, however, is not yet possible, but hopefully will be in the not too distant future. Once constructed, what will be the impact of the 'truth' on the nations and states of the former Yugoslavia. What will RECOM's contribution to this intensely fragmented landscape be? Will its approach to 'truth' be able to address the past in a manner that bridges divides? Or will its findings be manipulated in the same way as the verdicts of the ICTY, and bring ethnic tensions to a renewed boiling point?

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