**Program Design, Funding Models and Philanthropy in Community-Based NGOs Working in Genocide, Mass Atrocity and Identity-Based Violence Prevention**

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**INTRODUCTION**

A well-established global governance infrastructure is in place to address mass atrocity, including both the response to crimes and the prevention of future atrocities. Policy makers and researchers who engage in this field have identified a cross section of actors that play a role in preventing mass atrocities, including states, coalitions of states (often regionally defined), transnational advocacy organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and community-based non-governmental organizations. Researchers who study mass atrocity prevention, often focus on those entities perceived as having the most power in addressing these issues, typically states and coalitions of states, and to a somewhat lesser degree transnational private actors and international NGOs (Straus, 2016; Waller, 2016).

At the same time, recent research has emphasized the importance of localization in international development; this movement is also related to work involving atrocity prevention. With respect to the latter, advocates for localization argue that while there may be similarities across contexts at risk for atrocity or dealing with its consequences, prevention requires deep knowledge of local conditions and the ability to generate trust among groups in conflict within them. As such, community-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often well-positioned to engage in atrocity prevention activities. They are likely to have deep roots in or emerge from communities at risk for violence, knowledge and experience essential to be able to engage with groups in conflict within communities over their perceived intractable differences.

Scholars addressing the role community-based NGOs play in atrocity prevention have focused more on describing them conceptually, than conducting systematic empirical research about them (Straus, 2016; Waller, 2016; Whigham, 2019). As such, there has been little attention to the emergence of community-based NGOs addressing the threat of mass atrocity, how they generate the funds they need to operate, and their variations across contexts. Further, one of the challenges in studying NGOs' role in prevention is that these organizations often play a multiplicity of roles, including prevention, in the communities they serve (Straus, 2016; Appe, Rubaii & Whigham, 2022). This phenomenon has made it difficult to distinguish organizations that focus on atrocity prevention from other NGOs, and may account somewhat for the limited research attention they have received.

Nonetheless, scholars have begun to identify the network of community-based NGOs that work deliberately on atrocity prevention (Appe, Rubaii, & Whigham, 2023; Campbell, 2023; *Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*, n.d.), but these organizations have not been studied systematically. Notably, Appe, Rubaii, and Whigham (2023), developed a typology for defining the work of NGOs based on the extent to which NGOs define their work in terms of atrocity prevention. While they developed the typology through study of the NGO sector in South Sudan, the definition used to capture organizations focused on atrocity prevention, “integrated, development, humanitarian and atrocity,” may be used to capture atrocity prevention NGOs in other countries. If researchers see localization as essential to effective prevention, then we need to know more about the community-based NGOs that are doing this work and how they are approaching it, specifically how that work compares with the role described for them by atrocity prevention scholars.

This paper contributes to that work, providing an exploratory analysis of five cases of community-based NGOs in Europe and Africa, engaged in atrocity prevention work. The study uses Appe, Rubaii, and Whigham’s (2023) “integrated, development, humanitarian and atrocity,” description of atrocity prevention organizations (explained further below) to select NGOs to include. The study considers the following questions:

* How did these organizations emerge?
* What is their approach to atrocity prevention?
  + To what extent do these approaches align with conceptual frameworks used to describe atrocity prevention, by Waller (2016) and Whigham (2019)?
* How is each organization funded?
* In what essential ways do these organizations vary?

The paper proceeds as follows, we begin with a literature review, then describe the approach we took in selecting and analyzing the case studies. We provide a description of the findings from the case studies, utilizing the conceptual frameworks described above, and conclude with a discussion and implications for research.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mass atrocities are“large-scale, systematic violence against civilian populations” (Straus, 2016) on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliation or other group identity. They are widely understood to encompass the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as less clearly defined concepts such as ethnic cleansing and other acts of large-scale identity-based violence. Prevention involves the identification and response to risk factors for mass violence, and a range of activities designed to build societal resilience. Using a model of prevention assigns responsibility for prevention to individuals and organizations in all lines of work and at all levels, not simply the official leaders of nation states (Appe, Rubaii, & Whigham, 2021).

However, research on prevention of mass atrocities and its actors faces several challenges. First, mass atrocities are often high-impact/low-probability events and thus the absence of their occurrence is difficult to attribute to any particular prevention effort. Because it is inherently difficult to measure the effectiveness of prevention efforts, research in this area struggles to meet the expectations of moving beyond mere descriptive or conceptual accounts. Second, as is the case with any complex social problem, mass atrocities are the result of a multitude of factors, many of which may require fundamental changes in attitudes and behaviors over long periods of time. As noted by Reike, Sharon and Welsh (2015), “preventive action needs to cast a wider net than curative action, and therefore should encompass so-called structural factors” (p. 26).

As a field, mass atrocity prevention was grounded originally in studies of the Holocaust and other historical genocides, however, the field is moving in the direction of emphasizing the umbrella term of mass atrocities. With this direction, there are also many actors emerging. Major actors in prevention include nation states, international and regional organizations, as well as NGOs and transnational advocacy networks. Indeed, role of NGOs has garnered growing attention the work of mass atrocity prevention (e.g., Appe, Rubaii, Whigham, 2023; U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020). However, because the scholarship of NGOs falls across multiple fields and disciplines, it is challenging to understand the scope, outcomes and the potential of their atrocity prevention work. In consequence, we seek here to explore the role of NGOs in the prevention of mass atrocities.

NGOs have played various roles in mass atrocity contexts, engaging in activities that include “documentation, monitoring, reporting, advocacy, and community building” (Straus, 2016, p. 179). For example, NGOs provide humanitarian relief and emergency response by providing food, shelter and medical care in times natural disasters, famine, conflict. They also engage in development projects that seek longer term outcomes by providing access to clean water and sanitation, education, and provision of health services. In addition, NGOs are involved in advocacy and campaigning, particular related to human rights violations and bringing changes to alleviate vulnerable populations (Straus, 2016). In the 1990s, research on transnational advocacy networks emerged and became an important way of thinking about international relations, including the occurrence of atrocities. This includes a lot of different actors, e.g., celebrities, students, religion, private foundations, diasporas, academia, among others. These networks advocate and bring attention to specific problems. They are fluid – and seek to pressure the U.S., other countries, and the UN to take more of a stance against the atrocities.

Often, domestic NGOs are not identified actors as being focused on atrocity prevention, however, we are trying to reconsider this notion as the assumption likely does not match the empirical realities on the ground. NGO scholars for some time have acknowledged the spanning role of NGOs, albeit without underlining atrocity prevention per se. In setting out an INGO research agenda, Lewis and Opoku-Mensah (2006) explained: “Alongside the more familiar roles of service delivery and campaigning NGOs have also become active in a complex range of broader development activities that include democracy building, conflict resolution, human rights work, policy analysis, research and information provision” (p. 666).

The work of NGOs in atrocity prevention can be situated within established prevention frameworks. Waller (2016) uses the analogy of a river to distinguish between upstream (before conflict), midstream (in the midst of conflict), or downstream (post conflict) contexts. The specific prevention mechanisms vary according to each stage. While the notion of three distinct phases of mass atrocities is artificially linear and segregated, it provides a useful conceptual framework nonetheless.

Upstream mechanisms are associated with recognizing risk factors and alleviating root causes or structural conditions that might facilitate the occurrence of atrocity crimes. Prevention at this stage includes policies oriented to encourage more inclusiveness, increase social and economic equity, improve access to services, and ensure that groups are not ostracized or demeaned (Waller, 2016). This requires providers of public goods and services—government and NGOs alike—to be proactive in promoting diversity and inclusion in the full range of social and economic policies and programs. Prevention at this stage also involves monitoring early warning signs of violence and reacting before they have the opportunity to result in violence (Bellamy, 2015).

Once violence is underway, and governments and TSOs find themselves midstream, prevention tools may include threats of prosecutions, military interventions, economic sanctions, humanitarian relief, or other international actions intended to persuade perpetrators to stop and to provide victims with protection (Waller, 2016). At this stage, the emphasis is on minimizing the number of deaths and hastening a conclusion to the violence through coercive diplomacy and through humanitarian assistance to victims, including the many people forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian response is provided by many types of actors, including TSOs. In the aftermath of atrocities, or what in Waller’s terms is referred to as downstream, the prevention mechanisms include elements of transitional justice, criminal prosecutions, truth and reconciliation processes, reparations for victims, memorials and acts of remembrance, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes (Waller, 2016). While it may seem too late for prevention when mass atrocities have already occurred, the goal of downstream mechanisms is to prevent reoccurrence. The role of NGOs at this stage may be in facilitating community-based programs to encourage dialogue, developing memorials and museums, and assisting survivors navigate complex legal processes.

The term “atrocity prevention lens” was coined by Bellamy (2011; 2015) to refer to the process by which policy makers bring the perspective of prevention (in all its forms) to bear in their existing work regardless of their particular position. The idea is that if before a mass atrocity everyone is attentive to early warning signs within their own professional realm and is responsive to how policies and programs can contribute to prevention, we can become more effective in early-stage prevention. Were NGOs to apply an atrocity prevention lens to their work, they would be more attentive to identifying populations at risk for forced migration *before* they were forcibly displaced. In the literature, scholars would be attentive to whether the missions, policies and programs of the NGOs they study are systematically working toward prevention rather than simply response.

In addition to the three-point prevention continuum spanning the periods before, during, and after mass violence, Waller identifies risk factors associated with higher incidence of mass atrocities. These risk factors typically fall into four categories: those related to governance, economic conditions, conflict history, and social fragmentation (Waller, 2016). Within the four broad categories (See Table 1), specific warning signs have been statistically associated with the occurrence of mass atrocities and thus are used internationally to monitor and assess risk. For every risk factor, there are corresponding opportunities to build resilience and diminish the likelihood of atrocities. That said, atrocities are complex social and political phenomena, and no one intervention can singlehandedly prevent them from occurring. Rather, atrocity prevention requires a variety of responses and tools working in complementarity, and CSOs can play a role in this multilateral response.

In the case of NGO, engaging in atrocity prevention would require not only programmatic activities in economic development and governance but also contextualizing these efforts in issues around the other risk factors, namely, social fragmentation and history of conflict. Thus, to understand to what extent, in what ways, and with how much intentionality development CSOs articulate a contribution to the prevention of mass atrocities, we set out to analyze how and in what ways they address issues of social fragmentation. Additionally, in one case research conducted on the case of South Sudan (Appe, Rubaii, & Whigham, 2023), the authors approached their data asking how the work of CSOs is situated in relation to the history of the conflict and ongoing risks. Through the empirical setting of South Sudan, the research documented a range of programmatic efforts by development CSOs that can further support the reduction of identity-based violence, build community resilience to mass violence and thereby, we argue, simultaneously support democratization processes and the prevention of atrocities.

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| **Table 1. Risk Factors for Mass Atrocities (Waller, 2016)** | |
| **Governance**   * Regime Type * State Legitimacy Deficit * Weakness of State Structures * Identity-Based Polar Factionalism * Systemic State-Led Discrimination | **Conflict History**   * History of Identity-Related Tensions * Prior Genocides or Politicides * Past Cultural Trauma * Legacy of Vengeance or Group Grievance * Record of Serious Violations of Human Rights and Laws |
| **Economic Conditions**   * Low Levels of Economic Development * Economic Discrimination * Lack of Macroeconomic Stability * Economic Deterioration * Growth of Informal Economies and Black Markets | **Social Fragmentation**   * Identity-Based Social Divisions * Demographic Pressures * Unequal Access to Basic Goods and Services * Gender Inequalities * Political Instability |

Source: Waller, 2016

Whigham (2019) builds on Waller’s risk factors through what he calls ‘intractable conflicts’. He defines contexts experiencing intractable conflicts: “In these cases, societies are divided into specific identity groups, which serve as predominant organizing features in their lives and their senses of belonging. Each group tends to have its own distinct understanding of the past, which serves as a foundation for continued division. These understandings of the past are also used to legitimate continued acts of physical, institutional, economic, and social violence” (p. 44).

Whigham (2019) uses an analytical positioning of performance studies which suggests that “scenario thinking expands the focus from quantifiably measurable data sets to the qualitative analysis of embodied practices, historical narratives, and daily social interaction as key components in understanding and shifting the dynamics that underly division” (p. 47). His approach underlines local action, drawing our attention from “can be done from the outside to “fix” the problems of another society, but rather how those mitigating interventions can be supported and amplified to lead to more lasting change created from within” (Whigham, 2019, p. 47). He contributes “mitigating interventions” which can “diminish certain risk factors, making mass atrocity violence less likely” (p. 53). He describes four mitigating interventions:

1. recognizing and acknowledging;
2. allowing for alternative perspectives;
3. directing negative emotions to positive ends; and
4. re-writing the ending.

“…it requires that we recognize that real, systemic prevention is much more about supporting domestic initiatives, rather than coming in from without with a bundle of recipes and best practices that “need to be” enacted. Additionally, in many of the scenarios of intractability I have discussed here, state actors and politicians are often working directly against the mitigation of risk because they benefit politically from keeping conflict and division alive. Because of this, it is often (unfairly) civil society that must be the first sector to offer these alternative examples of what undoing intractability may look like” (Whigham, 2019, p. 60).

***Localization in Atrocity Prevention***

Many of these frameworks demonstrate that there is growing consensus that the prevention of mass atrocity cannot be limited to midstream only responses, that is, often relying on external military intervention. Such approaches are costly and often ineffective (Moix, 2016). External intervention by the international community tends to be reactive to violent conflict, rather than putting into place strategies to prevent it (Kantowitz, 2020). Atrocity prevention scholars like Whigham (2019), again, underline the import of “change created from within” (p. 47). That is, local solutions present the promise for both reducing the risk factors for mass violence and building locally-rooted resilience in and among communities. In sum, “… real, systemic prevention is much more about supporting domestic [or local] initiatives” (Whigham, 2019, p. 60). Local organizations are expected to have “moral accountability” and be “accountable for the achievement of some transcendent moral value, such as the advancement of human rights, the continuation of dedicated service to the disadvantaged, or effective responses to some urgent human needs such as hunger or genocide” (Brown and Moore, 2001, p. 571).

As a result, “creative domestications of prevention around the globe” are emerging through a process that is “both deep and broad, one that ultimately needs to include every layer of society and government to effectively integrate the preventive lens into day-to-day interactions and policy development” (Rosenberg, Galis and Zucker, 2015, p. 9). These domestications of prevention parallel calls for “localization” in the development and humanitarian fields, and the #ShiftThePower campaign in international philanthropy circles, which promotes local people mobilizing local resources (Hodgson & Knight, 2016). Whether considered domestication or localization (or shifting the power), this orientation when applied to atrocity prevention recognizes and strengthens local capacity, like that among community-based NGOs which we study here, in promoting local solutions to mitigating risks to identity-based violence (Roepstorff, 2020).

Regarding settings with high risk of mass atrocities, “the most important ‘civil society’ actors are frequently not formal NGOs” (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020, p. 2). Indeed, local, community-based organizations, and tend to be off the radar with limited relationships and linkages to entities in the larger, traditional aid system (Verdeja, 2019, p. 122). In atrocity prevention scholarship, local actors, however, “can and do demonstrate agency” (Moix, 2016, p. 63) and “prioritize[e] specific situational understanding” (Bellamy, 2015, p. 74) that can aid both international development agendas and prevent mass atrocities for more effective democratization.

A key challenge to local, community-based activities is the desperate funding streams, which are often “coordinated separately” (WINGS, 2023, p. 2). Overlapping and related fields, such as humanitarian, peacebuilding and development, tend to rely on funding that prioritizes top-down and siloed approaches. Scholars are increasingly positioning a wider understanding of “development” across the “domains” of humanitarian, peacebuilding and development fields to allow for less unnecessary segmentation (e.g., van Wessel, Kontinen & Bawole, 2023). In the spirit of proposing solutions, the Global Fund for Community Foundations suggests revised infrastructure for capacity to raise money domestically (GFCF website). To INGOs and other donors, they explain: “Our plea is that you work with us, not against us. We need to be supported, not competed with, and certainly not replaced” (GFCF website). This can include discretion in the use of funding (e.g., Bond, 2021), more funding for operations (Humentum, 2022) and funding that is flexible and not limited into 3-5 year projects (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2021; van Wessel, Kontinen & Bawole, 2023).

Additionally, localization has drawn more attention to local, domestic, and/or community philanthropic sources. Local (domestic) philanthropy and community philanthropy frameworks have been linked to what can be called ‘durable development’ (Hodgson & Knight, 2016), promoting ‘local people helping each other by sharing resources for the common good,’ (Doan, 2019), “local giving of time, money, experience, skills, or talent all with the altruistic objective of improving human welfare” (WINGS, 2023) and trusting local leadership (Lentfer & Cothran, 2017).

**METHODS**

Given the exploratory nature of the study, we chose to address the research questions through in-depth assessments of five community-based NGOs engaged in atrocity prevention related work each operating in different countries. We selected organizations using Appe, Rubaii, & Whigham’s (2023, p. 21) typology for defining the work of non-governmental organizations. The authors present the framework as a triangle that places NGOs in one of three categories: 1) “Conventional Service Delivery CSOs”; 2) “Development in a Humanitarian Context CSO”; and 3) “Integrated Humanitarian, Development, and Atrocity Prevention”. While the typology uses the term “civil society organization” for purposes of this study, we see it as interchangeable with non-governmental organizations, and recognize that individual countries use different terms to describe organizations with a public benefit purpose that operate outside of government.

Each of the five organizations fits the definition of an “integrated humanitarian, development and atrocity prevention” organization provided in the Appe, Rubaii, and Whigham (2023) typology. These types of organizations are described as “explicitly and intentionally articulat[ing] atrocity prevention—i.e., acknowledgement of risk mitigation and building of resilience—as a means in which to enhance their humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions” (p. 21). The five organizations were selected to capture variation across countries and differences in the conflicts—or threat of conflict—presented. They were identified in consultation with scholars from the Institute for Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention (<https://www.binghamton.edu/i-gmap/index.html>) at Binghamton University.

The organizations selected for this study have been included as part of a course at Binghamton University that considers the work of nongovernmental organizations globally through a mass atrocity prevention lens (Campbell, 2023). As such, representatives of the five organizations participated in interviews with students, and in some cases the faculty member, about their work. Notes from and/or recordings of those interviews were available for this study. In addition, staff from the organizations provided a range of other materials, including financial documents, program descriptions, newsletters, and annual reports for analysis. Finally we used social media pages and websites as data sources. The five countries and organizations we studied include:

* Bosnia and Herzegovina, Centre for Peacebuilding
* Kosovo, Community Building Mitrovica
* Northern Ireland, South East Fermanagh Foundation
* South Africa, District Six Museum
* Turkey, Karakutu

The goal of the study was to learn about the founding, approach, and financial support (funding) for the five organizations. Data about program design and activities were coded and analyzed both inductively and deductively, using codes based on Whigham’s (2019) analysis of intractable conflicts and descriptions of prevention approaches taken from Straus (2016) and Waller (2016). Data about organization founding and funding were analyzed thematically to look for patterns and differences across cases.

**FINDINGS**

We have organized the findings of the study by across the selected NGOs as follows. First, we provide a description of the organization, including its mass atrocity prevention activities. For each organization, we outline their activities, using ideas and concepts taken from Straus (2016), Waller (2016), Whigham (2019). Then in each NGO section, we present information about the funding.

1. Centre for Peacebuilding, Sanski Most, Bosnia Herzegovina.

The Centre for Peacebuilding was founded by two survivors of the conflict in Bosnia in the early to mid 1990s. Each went through traumatic experiences at that time, which motivated them to create the organization. One noted that focusing his energy on reconciliation was critical in his ability to move past “the hate and anger that was eating me up for years” and to focus instead on “love, compassion, and understanding” (Centre for Peacebuilding, n.d.). The organization’s mission reiterates this emphasis on reconciliation among different ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs). Further, the organization identifies several core values that underlie its work, including mutual listening, understanding, and compassion through (re)building relationships” (Centre for Peacebuilding, n.d.).

In the context of atrocity prevention, staff at the Centre for Peacebuilding define the challenge it faces in terms of social fragmentation that has persisted beyond the end of the conflict in Bosnia in 1995, noting that reconciliation has not occurred among ethnic groups, and that people from different groups rarely interact with each other. In this way, the challenge the organization addresses appears to have the characteristics Whigham (2019) uses to describe intractable conflicts.

Using Waller’s framework for atrocity prevention, materials provided by the Centre for Peacebuilding, describing its activities indicate that its primary focus is addressing one of Waller’s (2016) four dimensions of atrocity prevention: social fragmentation. Further, the activities include all four elements of Whigham’s approach to addressing intractable problems. For example, one project, Societal Transformation and Reconciliation involves activities reflective of each of these elements. First, the program seeks to “create a safe space in which people can understand each other and one another’s perspectives” (allowing for alternative perspectives). Second, the program “build[s] relationships with people of different backgrounds,” so that they can “begin dealing with and healing from the past” (recognizing and acknowledging). Third, they use the program to “advocate for a better life” (rewriting the ending). Fourth, program participants “learn and practice peace principles and methods, and commit to carrying out multiple peace projects in their home communities” (turning negative emotions into positive ends). These four elements are also present across other activities conducted by the organization, including a considerable focus on interfaith dialogue and engagement (allowing for alternative perspectives) and discuss topics typically considered “taboo,” such as the history of conflict and inter-group bias (recognizing and acknowledging).   
 Much of the work of the Centre for Peacebuilding is done by volunteers. It operates on a modest budget and gets limited support from individual donations, and episodic funding from European foundations with an interest in the Balkans. In this way, it resembles a grass-roots organization, sustained by the commitment of its founders and local volunteers.

1. Community Building Mitrovica, Mitrovica, Kosovo

Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) operates in northern Kosovo, the part of the country most evenly divided between ethnic Serbs and Albanians. The city of Mitrovica is divided by the Ibar River, on the north side of which the Serbian population lives, and the south side of which the Albanian population lives. A Dutch organization, the Interchurch Council, founded CBM in 2001, at the end of the conflict between Serbs and Albanians. Since 2003, the organization has been registered with the government of Kosovo and led by citizens of that country. The organization’s mission and vision are based in Mitrovica’s reality as a multi-ethnic city with a history of conflict. The mission describes CBM as an “interethnic grassroots organization” and that as such, it “identifies, encourages and facilitates joint actions of citizens in the Mitrovica region in order to promote cooperation, co-existence and democratic values.” Its vision is of Mitrovica as “a safe, diverse place where accountable institutions, civil society and active citizens appreciate differences in a democratic culture” (Community Building Mitrovica, n.d.).

The mission and vision statements reflect that CBM sees its roles in atrocity prevention as addressing social fragmentation between Serbs and Albanians. The use of terms such as “co-existence,” “inter-ethnic,” “joint action” and “democratic values” indicate this focus. The work of the organization also incorporates two other elements of Waller’s (2016) framework for atrocity prevention, governance and economic conditions. Like the Centre for Peacebuilding, the activities CBM undertakes reflect Whigham’s (2019) four elements for addressing intractable conflicts. The persistence of ethnic tensions and the threat of violence in northern Kosovo suggests that the term intractable applies to this region (Engelbrecht, 2023; Hopkins, 2022).

One of the strongest indicators of Community Building Mitrovica’s efforts to address social fragmentation is the considerable emphasis of programming for women. Waller (2016) notes that the degradation of women is a feature of mass atrocity, and that efforts to create a more equitable society with greater economic opportunity for women are essential to effective prevention. The School for Activism, in which CBM plays a leadership role, features “gender integration” as a core topic. In addition, the organization has created programming that focuses on entrepreneurship opportunities for women across ethnic groups. For example, one social media post advertised a fair “to promote handmade products by women and youth with special needs from Mitrovica.” Another activity, an “awareness campaign” highlighted the experiences of women who were sexually assaulted during the war in Kosovo. In broad terms, however, the organization identifies a wide range of activities designed to address social fragmentation through dialogue and trust-building exercises.

While Community Building Mitrovica’s programming provides evidence for all four elements addressing intractable conflicts, one of them seems most prevalent, rewriting the ending. CBM provides considerable attention to the idea of rewriting the ending, or reimagining what is possible. For example, a recent annual report describes three different activities that capture this idea. One involves young Serbs and Albanians, imagining a different future, as part of a group of Europeans from regions that have experienced conflict. A second example involves convening representatives from local governments led by people from different ethnic groups to enhance employment opportunities for young people. The third focuses on civic engagement and providing space for local groups to create and participate in policy debates focused on envisioning a better future. This kind of activity is consistent with Waller’s (2016) emphasis on building more equitable governance as a means of reducing the potential for mass atrocity.

While Community Building Mitrovica describes itself as a grassroots organization, its funding profile resembles a more traditional, established non-governmental organization. In contrast to the Centre for Peacebuilding, CBM relies on funding from a wide range of institutional sources, some from Kosovo governmental institutions, but primarily from outside the country, including several EU countries (notably the Netherland, Germany, and Austria), as well as the United States Association for International Development, the Kosovo office of The Open Society Institute.

1. Karakutu, Istanbul, Turkey.

Karakutu (“Black Box”) is a grass roots, community-based non-governmental organization founded in 2014 in Istanbul, founded by university faculty and students. It operates with a small, part-time staff of two. As with CBM and the Centre for Peacebuilding, Karakutu’s primary focus is social fragmentation. However, in this case the organization’s orientation is to address limits in the state version of history, which Karakutu sees as excluding the voices and experiences of marginalized groups. In this way, the organization looks back not only to the Armenian genocide, but to other groups that are not part of the dominant narrative in Turkish history and public life. As such, Karakutu defines its purpose as “to raise voices of the alternative narratives that were suppressed by official history and to introduce different perspectives about the past to society, especially to youth” (Karaktu, 2019). The organization seeks to “remember past violence and wrongdoings” and sees this work as essential in building a more just and peaceful society.

This focus on the limitations of state history, again, means that from a mass atrocity prevention perspective, the organization is addressing social fragmentation. Further, the organization emphasizes two of the elements defined as mechanisms for moving past intractable problems, allowing for alternative perspective and recognizing and acknowledging different groups’ experiences. Karakutu’s primary strategy is introducing participants to versions of history that are different from those provided by the state education system. The organization does this through narrated memory walks in Istanbul neighborhoods in which leaders tell stories of what happened in those places. The goal of the walks is “to facilitate critical thinking against the dominant historical narratives,” and enabling participants to consider new perspectives on Turkish history. The memory walks provide an opportunity for participants to come to recognize and acknowledge what has happened in the past. As one participant noted about the memory walk “the feeling of standing together sharing our common troubles by looking at the past and the city we live in from another perspective was very precious to me,” further noting that this experience contributed to the development of a “common language.” In this way, it seems that the opportunity to learn alternative perspectives supports the ability to recognize and acknowledge others’ experiences, essential elements in building a society’s capacity to move past intractable conflicts.

Because Karakutu operates in opposition to state institutions, challenging its view of history, it is unsurprising that it does not receive funding for its work from government. Instead, the organization seems largely built on individual donations–a list of individual donors is provided on its website, and modest institutional support, primarily from domestic and German funders.

1. South East Fermanagh Foundation, Lisnaskea, Northern Ireland

The South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) defines itself somewhat differently than the organizations in this study. It orients its work to the victims of The Troubles in Northern Ireland, and in opposition to those who perpetrated atrocity crimes. It defines victims broadly and provides services designed to address issues that arise from their status as victims. In place of a mission statement, the organization presents an “ethos”:

SEFF is clear that in the context of ‘The Northern Ireland Troubles’ that there was no justification for terrorism and/or other criminal violence irrespective of who carried it out – criminal violence was wrong and unjustified. Our group’s focus is upon the innocent and we make no distinction on the basis of someone’s religious or ethnic background …. Innocent Victims Uniting (South East Fermanagh Foundation, n.d.).

One of the things that stands out in this statement is that by making victims and perpetrators the essential distinction for its work, the organization de-emphasizes the religious and political differences that were at the heart of the conflict in Northern Ireland. In this way, the organization looks past the features that Whigham (2019) identifies as contributing to intractable conflicts, notably competitive victimhood, and presumes common interests. For SEFF, people across Northern Ireland, regardless of religion or political affiliation were victims of The Troubles, and the challenge is recovery and rebuilding.

As such, SEFF’s focus is less on social fragmentation or any of the other aspects of prevention Waller (2016) emphasizes. The organization’s work aligns much more with two of the strategies Whigham (2019) outlines for addressing intractable conflicts: recognizing and acknowledging the events of the past, and directing negative emotions to positive ends. These two elements seem to rely more on individual reflection than communal activity, which is consistent with SEFF’s focus on one-on-one engagement with victims.

One program that captures South East Fermanagh Foundation’s focus on recognizing and acknowledging the events of the past is its Border Trail, a path with markers noting sites where people were killed during the conflict in Northern Ireland. Pamphlets describing the trail characterize those having done the killing as “terrorists” and emphasizes the opportunity for people walking along the trail to reflect on what happened there. SEFF defines the purpose of the trail as to “give visitors a sense of the deep hurt inflicted on communities and to demonstrate the humility of those affected and explain their resolve and heroism in surviving gross acts of injustice.” The trail provides a tangible experience that facilitates participants’ ability to reckon with a past that created victims. Further, the emphasis on victims on both sides of the conflict makes it possible for people to define the conflict more in terms of victims and less in terms of the different sides in the conflict. In addition, the organization’s Advocacy and Innocent Victims Program is defined as supporting “innocent victims and survivors of violence,” but with an emphasis on “their justice, truth and accountability needs.” This approach also captures the organization’s interest in moving past intractable conflicts and preventing future violence through recognizing and acknowledging the events of the past.

SEFF also undertakes programming designed to enable victims to redirect their negative emotions toward positive ends. Two examples stand out. A community garden project providing individual allotments to participants is defined as bringing people from diverse backgrounds together and building community. Second, the organization defines the mental health services it provides for victims of The Troubles as making it possible for people to “live [their] life to the fullest.” Similarly, the organization provides volunteering assistance and education and training for victims whose opportunities were limited due to violence in the past. These activities support the ability for all victims to take positive steps that improve their lives and move past the violence they experienced.

In contrast to the other four organizations studied, SEFF receives considerable domestic government support, primarily Victim and Survivor Services. For the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years, more than half of its funding came from this source. In addition, SEFF also receives a high level of support from the European Union. Collectively, government sources account for approximately 90% of the revenue SEFF receives, with the remaining ten percent comprised of a mix of institutional funders and individual donations.

1. The District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa.

The District Six Museum, located in Cape Town, South Africa, is the only case included in this study that is not from Europe. It is also different from the other four cases in that it defines itself as a museum. However, its purpose includes engaging the public in the experience of apartheid through displacement and the related atrocities that took place in the District Six neighborhood of Cape Town. In this way, the work of the organization fits as an example of an NGO focused on atrocity prevention. It addresses both social fragmentation and incorporates the four types of activities identified as contributing to intractable conflicts. The organization’s mission is:

An internationally engaged museum of innovation working with the memories of District Six and other communities affected by forced removals, and contributing to the cultural reconstruction and restitution of post-apartheid Cape Town.

The museum’s description of itself as “engaged” indicates that the museum does not see itself as a passive setting for visitors. Rather, it sees itself as participating in work that rebuilds and provides “restitution” for those affected by apartheid. A further indication of the museum’s atrocity prevention orientation is that its vision statement foresees an “inclusive public culture,” one, seemingly, to which the museum seeks to contribute. The museum further describes much of its work as “tak[ing] place outside of its buildings: on the vacant sites of District Six, within the returned community of families.”

While Community Building Mitrovica and the Centre for Peacebuilding are designed to bring together groups that face conflict, The District Six Museum, by contrast, creates space for those groups to come together and learn from each other, particularly from the experiences of those displaced from the District Six neighborhood and their descendants. In this way, the Museum emphasizes three of the dimensions for addressing intractable conflicts: recognizing and acknowledging the atrocities that took place, directing negative emotions toward positive ends, and rewriting the ending. As a memory site, it focuses less on the fourth dimension, allowing for alternative perspectives.

The dominant theme in the Museum’s work is memory, as such a means of recognizing and acknowledging atrocity. It does this in several ways, most of which tell the story of the District Six neighborhood first, as a vibrant neighborhood for people of different races and social groups and second as a place where people experienced the pain of forced removal by the government of South Africa, beginning in 1966. The Museum uses oral histories of people who lived in District Six as one way of bringing their experiences to life. A second approach is through an exhibit using suitcases as a metaphor to capture the challenge of having to leave District Six and the limited number of belongings residents were able to take with them. Both of these activities reflect the museum’s interest in providing participants with the opportunity to recognize and acknowledge the history of the District Six neighborhood.

The Museum has also created opportunities for those affected by the removal from District Six by directing their negative emotions toward positive ends. Much of this work focuses on the interest of former residents and their descendents to return to the District Six neighborhood. For example, the Museum reimagined one site in the neighborhood “where memory could be performed and creatively re-appropriated through a revival of traditional home based crafts like embroidery, sewing and appliqué work.” A second example uses the image of a former central gathering place in District Six, The Seven Steps, creating a club that utilizes the Seven Steps name, and provides an opportunity for displaced community members, their families, and others to gather. The Museum describes the Seven Steps Club as “the life-blood of the Museum’s work and the source of much of its energy.” Both these examples capture ways in which those most directly affected by the District Six removals have converted some of the negative emotions from that experience and converted into efforts at rebuilding.

Finally, in a related way, the Museum also engages in activities that envision a different future, one that rewrites the ending of the conflict that led to the forced removals from District Six. The best example of this strategy is the construction of a community health center on the site of a hospital that had served the District Six neighborhood. The construction of the community center honors the important role the hospital played in the community prior to the forced removal, and creates a new institution, responsive to the needs of the District Six neighborhood, as it has emerged in the post-apartheid era.

Revenue sources for the District Six Museum include elements typical of arts and culture institutions, with rental and entrance fees and gift shop purchases as the largest source of funding. In addition, two South African government agencies have provided the next highest level of support, but the most recent annual report indicates that these grants are time-limited. Finally several private institutional funders support the Museum, along with a small number of individual donors.

**DISCUSSION**

This paper explores the role community-based NGOs play in mass atrocity prevention, notably program design and funding, utilizing prevention frameworks by Straus (2016), Waller (2016) and Whigham (2019) which allows us to distinguish variations across countries. We selected community-based NGOs that fit into Appe, Rubaii, and Whigham’s (2023) “integrated, development, humanitarian and atrocity” category of NGOs based on their analysis of South Sudanese NGOs. “Integrated, development, humanitarian and atrocity” which are ideal-type NGOs that “explicitly and intentionally articulate atrocity prevention” (Appe et al., 2023, p. 21). The five case studies include four organizations in Europe and one in Africa. The cases indicate that the prevention roles NGOs play go beyond those suggested by Straus (2016). Notably, all five organizations focus on only one of the prevention domains Waller (2016) identifies, social fragmentation; and only one of the five organizations (CBM) conducts programming that falls under any of the three other domains. Each organization engages in activities that align with some or all of Whigham’s (2019) four tactics for addressing intractable conflicts, though the organizations vary in approach in important ways. Finally, few patterns are clear across cases regarding funding. Notably, very little financial support comes from the government of the country in which the organization is based–South Africa is the primary exception–, which suggests, at best, disinterest or a lack of prioritization on the work of these organizations.

Among the findings that most stands out across cases is the specific and relatively consistent role NGOs play in atrocity prevention. As noted, researchers who study mass atrocity prevention identify a wide range of institutional actors in atrocity prevention, and a cross section of roles and domains in which they participate. These case studies indicate that community-based NGOs do work that extends beyond Straus’ (2016, p. 180) characterization of their role as focused on “document[ing], advocat[ing], communicat[ing], disseminat[ing] information.” Further, the NGOs’ efforts reflect only one of Waller’s (2016) domains (social fragmentation), and pursue activities that address interactions between or among groups that are in conflict. In two of the settings facing pronounced intractable conflicts, Bosnia and Kosovo, the organizations bring people together from different ethnic groups to mitigate fragmentation. By contrast, the Northern Ireland organization defines those from both sides of the conflict there as “victims,” and seeks to address social fragmentation by dividing that group from those who perpetrated violence, “terrorists.” Both the South African and Turkish organizations have missions that address fragmentation but do so not by convening conflict groups, but providing opportunities for local residents to participate in educational or cultural programs designed to build community.

Across cases, there is evidence that community-based NGOs utilize the four different tactics Whigham (2019) describes as essential for countries to address effectively conflicts perceived as intractable. Notably, the two organizations that define their work most explicitly in terms of conflict between groups, the Centre for Peacebuilding (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Community Building MItrovica (Kosovo), incorporate all four elements, perhaps because the elements are so explicitly related to the challenge and enduring threat of inter-group violence. Among the other three organizations, which are less directly focused on reducing intergroup tensions as a tactic, recognizing and acknowledging the event of the past is a central feature in their programming. Two of the three organizations also emphasize putting negative emotions to positive ends. These approaches indicate that the organizations seek to engage residents about past events and recovering from them, but focus less on direct engagement with representatives of the groups with which participants may have been in conflict.

The five cases also differ in terms of their funding model, which we in part contribute to their level of formalization. Two of the five are modest in scale, the Centre for Peacebuilding (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Karakutu (Turkey), are essentially grass-roots organizations, while the other three are more formal with considerable infrastructure. Centre for Peacebuilding and Karakutu both rely on volunteers to carry out their work and receive limited financial support, primarily from local? individual donors, and periodically from institutional funders based outside of their home countries. However, neither receives financial support from the governments of their home countries. The remaining three are more formal, have larger budgets, and receive significant institutional support. The South East Fermanagh Foundation receives support from the European Union, and CBM receives funding from several EU members and the United States, suggesting both EU members and American interests in both countries and preventing future violence there. One question to consider is whether formalization and capacity accounts for the external funding or whether other factors account for this interest. While the District Six Museum does not receive funds from outside South Africa, it does, like SEFF and CBM receive some support from government, either at the national or local level, which indicates government commitment to the prevention work each undertakes.

As an exploratory effort, this paper describes the work of NGOs addressing atrocity prevention in settings that have experienced considerable inter-group violence and may be at risk of it again in the future. It compares the five settings and applies conceptual frameworks used to describe the approaches to mass atrocity prevention utilized by a wide range of institutional actors. The paper raises more questions that it answers and provides a foundation for future research on the role NGOs play in mass atrocity prevention. For example, what accounts for variation in financial support for these kinds of NGOs from outside their home countries? How do we evaluate the success of the different prevention approaches of the organizations described in this study, such as those that engage conflicting groups together CBM or Centre for Peacebuilding), compared to those that do so more indirectly (such as with Karakutu or the District Six Museum) or those that characterize people across groups as victims (SEFF)? As the field of mass atrocity studies, there are considerable opportunities to investigate the understudied role of NGOs. The questions listed above are among those it would be valuable to pursue.

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