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“Transnational art and its role in the (re)construction of memory and identity in post-conflict societies. The case of the Bosnian female artists in Vienna.”

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Dipl.-Ing. Jelena Jokic, B.Sc.

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Univ.-Prof. Dr. Petra Dannecker, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the unprecedented peace-building effort on an international scale, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is today – 25 years after the war officially ended – still a battleground of identity and memory. The Dayton Peace Agreement ended the bloodshed in 1995, but it has also enshrined ethnonationalism into the constitution, making ethnic identification the organizing principle of society (Majstorović/Turjačanin 2013: 2). ‘Divide and rule’ identity politics still carries the day: electoral campaigns are run and won by pitting the three constitutional ethnicities (Bosniak, Serb, and Croat) and two territorial entities (Republic of Srpska and Federation BiH) against each other (Karabegović 2014, Arsenijević et al. 2016, Mijić 2017a). Ethnic division paired with corruption, political favoritism and nepotism have kept the same leaders and political parties in power for decades after the war, leaving younger generations with no other option but to ‘vote with their feet’ (Lakić 2018).

Mass emigration from BiH has led to a well-documented ‘brain drain’: 79% of researchers, 81% of master’s degrees and 75% PhD holders have left the country between 1995 and 2005 (Uvalić 2005, as cited by Nikolić et al. 2010). Recent UNESCO (2019) reports show a steady high skill emigration rate (annual emigration rate of the tertiary educated population) in BiH: from 23.5% in the 1990s to 21.8% in 2010. Research has almost exclusively approached this phenomenon from an economic perspective, as governments provide funding to explore possibilities of diaspora engagement for economic development. Art and cultural production are marginalized in the discussions of the country’s bleak development prospects, but at what cost? What happens to cultural production as it becomes displaced and dispersed by the collective trauma of war, system change and mass emigration? This paper aims to provide a rare cultural perspective on this issue by exploring the links between transnational cultural production and the country’s post-war cultural development.

Steady exodus of BiH intelligentsia since the early 1990s has relinquished the discourse construction to the male-dominated domains of politics and religion. Against this background, this qualitative case study looks at Bosnian female émigré artists in Vienna and their strategies of asserting their voices on the BiH ‘battleground of memory and identity’ (Laclau/Mouffe 1985). It sets out to map female cultural production taking place within the BiH community in Vienna and to examine the extent to which first-generation migrant artists maintain ties to their homeland through their work, social networks, and institutional collaborations. Building on extensive scholarship on the role of art in the healing and reconciliation processes of post-conflict societies, this paper proposes a new conversation by introducing a transnational gendered

perspective. How does the female cultural production outside of national borders contribute to BiH's stunted cultural development and the (re)construction of its contested cultural identity?

The BiH community in Vienna provides a paradigmatic setting for this inquiry. Due to its geographic proximity and imperial history, Vienna is home to one of the largest and rapidly growing BiH expatriate communities in the world. Although Habsburg history maintains that the Austro-Hungarian Empire never had colonies, Clemens Ruthner (2018) sketches several parallels of the Austrian conquest and rule of BiH which are constitutive of other Western colonialism (s. Chapter 1.4). The turbulent historical relationship between the two countries – which culminated in the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by a Bosnian student, leading to the First World War and the end of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy – uniquely shapes the post-colonial positionalities of BiH female migrant artists in Vienna and distinguishes their work from other BiH diasporic art.

Vienna also offers a historical parallel par excellence for the study of new hubs of diasporic cultural production spurred by mass emigration of intelligentsia in the context of war. In the run up to the Second World War, the anti-Semitic reactionary climate drove out an entire generation of Viennese Jewish intellectuals; many of them to the United States (Boeckl 1995). Boeckl (1995) documents the fates of Austrian architects who settled in the US, where the liberal environment offered a playground for the realization of their avant-garde visions (ibid.). Los Angeles is a particularly prominent example: Richard Neutra, Rudolph M. Schindler, and many other Austrian architects went on to build some of the most iconic modernist architecture that still defines this city's identity today. At the same time, German-speaking actors, directors, writers, and composers who fled persecution in Europe — including the Viennese film director Fritz Lang — shaped Hollywood's 'Golden Age', producing classics such as "Ninotchka" (1939), "Sunset Boulevard" (1950), and "Casablanca" (1942) (Skirball Cultural Center 2014). These forgotten histories illustrate the power of émigré cultural production in its highest form to shape collective identities. They also speak of the irreparable damage that a society suffers as a consequence of losing a generation of cultural producers and having their contributions erased from its cultural memory (Boeckl 1995: 19). While cultural contributions of the Jewish diaspora have been widely studied, this paper seeks to examine similar processes in the under-researched area of BiH cultural production.

As a Bosnian architect living and working in Vienna for the past 15 years, this research project is personal for me for several reasons. It involves researching my own community and spans my experiences and interests in art, cultural development, post-conflict recovery, and diasporas. Researching this multi-faceted topic requires reaching across disciplinary boundaries and including the perspectives and methodologies from diverse fields: cultural studies, memory

and trauma studies, diaspora and transnationalism studies, biographical research and development studies. This paper's theoretical framework links these insights to discuss how cultural identity, memory, and trauma are continuously socially (re)constructed. Furthermore, it examines how collective identity is altered by 'cultural trauma' (Alexander et al. 2004) and how these processes are represented and constituted in female transnational art. This is followed by an empirical study of four biographical interviews with female artists of BiH origin living and working in Vienna.

The first chapter will contextualize this inquiry by discussing the problem of collective identity and memory in contemporary BiH. It will provide an overview of the post-war art scene both in the country and within its global diaspora, as well as a brief history of the BiH (e)migration to Vienna. The second chapter provides the theoretical framework, followed by a discussion of the research question and methodological considerations in the third chapter. Lastly, the fourth chapter will present the work of the artists in the study. Biographical interview analysis will contextualize their experiences within the larger context of mass emigration of intelligentsia from post-war BiH and reconstruct their artistic agency on the battleground of BiH memory and identity.

1. CONTEXT

1.1. Battleground of Memory and Identity

Although post-war BiH exists within the same borders as it did within Yugoslavia, its demographic map is radically different. Ethnic cleansing and internal displacement have created a de-facto segregated society (Kačapor-Džihic/Oruč 2012: 7), in which the three ethno-religious groups form an absolute majority in their respective territories, Orthodox Serbs in Republic of Srpska, Catholic Croats in Herzegovina, and Muslim Bosniaks in the rest of the Federation BiH. The violent demographic change in the war thus marked a transition from “identities associated with *place* to identities associated with *ethnicity*, with the latter’s powerful symbolic associations with the past, the ancestors, kinship and blood” (Olsen 1993, as cited by Chapman 1994: 125, italics added).

Reducing individual identity to ethnicity resulted in the conflation of the individual with the group identities (Mijić 2017a). Exacerbated by the existential threat of ethnic violence, wholesale identification with the ethnic group annihilated all other forms of identification, leaving no room for alternative concepts of individual identity (Verdery 1994, as cited by Mijić 2017a, translated from German by the author). As the one-dimensional “I” became the ethnic “We”, hierarchic distinctions between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ emerged, whereby one’s own ethnic group is characterized as better, morally superior, and more civilized: the “in-group charisma” is contrasted to the “out-group disgrace” (Mijić 2017b: 152, citing Elias 2001: 16-18).

Gender is central to the ethnonationalist construction of collective identity. In the war, women were constructed as “carriers of cultures and mothers of a nation” (Arvidsson/Nermany 2007, Simmons 2010) and pushed into traditional gender roles, with an emphasis on reproduction. Their bodies became symbols of “male-directed battles over ethnic identity” (Kolind 2008: 120), making them strategic targets of military violence. The rape of women was presented as the “symbolic rape of territory and ethnic identity”, associated with the notions of chastity and honor, purity and dirtiness (Meznarić 1994, Olujić 1998, as cited by Kolind 2008: 120; Arvidsson/Nermany 2007). The increased re-traditionalization, re-patriarchalization and poverty in the aftermath of the war thus reversed the female emancipation achieved in socialist Yugoslavia (Simmons 2010, Majstorović 2011).

The intersection of ethnic and gender hierarchies is reflected on the battleground of memory as well. As individuals in BiH began to fully identify with their ethnic group, any attempt to confront the traumatic past and seek accountability for the atrocities of war was perceived as an indictment of the collective, rather than of those individuals who were in power at the time (Mijić 2017b). In this context, competing narratives of memory and self-victimization still

dominate the ethnically divided political and media landscape. According to Mijić (2017b), self-victimization is an effective strategy to maintain a positive self-image in light of the externally induced delegitimization of ethnic organizing in the post-war peace-building era. It provides moral justification and international support, but more importantly, it serves to absolve the individual and the ethnic group they identify with from responsibility. To this end, in-group war crimes are denied and relativized, and the out-group victims discredited, in particular war crimes against women and systemic rape. Denialism of the ethnic Other's trauma has been the primary strategy of ethnonationalist 'divide and rule' politics. Narratives of "eternal hatred", the "impossible state" and ticking "time-bomb" (Majstorović/Turjačanin 2013: 2) were assimilated into the collective consciousness, disrupting and delegitimizing the memory of a multicultural coexistence. For nationalism to take root in the most diverse Yugoslav republic, massive cultural sacrifice had to be made at its altar. The war-time destruction of monuments erased historical traces of the existence of an ethnic Other in space. Bosnian cultural heritage from the Yugoslav era was divided and disowned along ethnic lines, as not only artists, but entire genres and even musical instruments became invested with ethnic identity (Kolind 2008: 119).

The war thus eroded an essential cultural aspect of the Bosnian way of life: the experience of alterity, the habituation to the other and familiarity with otherness (Lovrenović 1999: 200, as cited by Mijić 2017a). For Lovrenović (2015: 32), this "civilizational interwovenness, expressed in the concurrency of one mutual and three separate traditions" represents the most important marker of Bosnian cultural identity. Lovrenović's insight is key to understanding the paradox of the post-war identity crisis. While everyday communication reinforces the mutuality of language, food, craft, custom, and other elements of the folk culture between different ethnic groups and fosters individual belonging, the collective level ascribes sharply differentiated group belongings whose primary face is religion (Lovrenović 2015: 41). For Lovrenović, this "parallelism of belonging" is the quintessential condition of the modern Bosnian experience (ibid.). Lovrenović exposes the historical duality between so-called high culture – dominated by expressions of difference between the three separate traditions– and folk culture, which established practices of mutuality. He thus establishes historical continuity to the current state of the BiH discourse: the separatist (post-)war narratives are produced at the top, while grassroots art initiatives struggle to establish cooperation across ethnic boundaries (Karabeg 2017). Interestingly, despite its existential struggles, the post-war BiH art scene remains a rare exception to the exclusion of women from the processes of identity and memory construction, as I will elaborate in the following chapter.

1.2. BiH Post-War Art Scene

In an interview for the Austrian paper *derStandard*, prominent BiH artists Veso Sovilj and Radenko Milak describe the precarious position of BiH artists:

“‘The existence of the Bosnian artist is a miracle’, says Veso Sovilj, a professor at the Art Academy in Banja Luka. Non-existent cultural policies and lack of financial resources characterize the cultural enterprise, similarly to the entire Bosnian society. ‘Only half a convertible mark per capita is spent on culture in the Republic of Srpska’, Radenko Milak describes the situation in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian republic. Last year, the state did not buy a single book. ‘Non-existent cultural policy is also a policy because it can pursue specific interests,’ says Sovilj.” (Dabić/Stajić 2011 - translated from German by the author)

The institutional division along ethnic and entity lines is reflected in BiH’s art scene(s) as well: two separate cultural productions are developing and operating in two entities independently of each other (Vukičević 2013:1). The two largest cities and administrative capitals of their respective entities, Sarajevo and Banja Luka, are the gravitational points for artists from each entity. Museums of contemporary art in these two cities function as the stewards of cultural development. Both institutions are led by women, Dunja Blažević (Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art) and Sarita Vujković (Museum of Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska in Banja Luka), exemplifying the increased female presence on the BiH art scene in the post-war era, both in cultural production and leadership roles (Simmons 2010).

While individual artists strive to work across the lines of division, national cultural policy and joint representation on the international stage remain elusive (Dabić/Stajić 2011, Vukičević 2013, Savansukha 2015). An often-cited example of the struggle between the artists and the ethnonationalist institutional policy is the country’s participation (and lack thereof) at the Venice Art Biennale. Inspired by the World Fairs of the second half of the 19th century, Venice Biennale is organized in national pavilions, whereby nation-states distinguish themselves through their art “in a very clearly defined national territory” (Savansukha 2015: 24). The art is thus inevitably bound with national identity, which in a fragmented country like BiH represents a hurdle to participation (*ibid.*).

Since its first participation at the Venice Biennale in 2003, BiH hasn’t been represented at the exhibition until 2013. The institutions could not agree which artist should represent the country, based on the ‘ethnicity quota’ and ‘equal representation’. In response, the artist group “Tač.ka” (“Full-stop”) launched an action called “Full-stop on non-participation of BiH at the Venice Biennale” in 2007 to bring attention that BiH was the only nation in Europe not represented at the Art Biennale. The group installed a black cardboard dot in other countries’ pavilions and documented the installation, creating an “Imaginary Pavilion of BiH”. After the

Biennale, the “Imaginary Pavilion” was taken to the University of Banja Luka, where it was banned by the university administration because the sign at the entrance to the exhibition read “Bosnia and Herzegovina” (as is customary at international exhibitions), which was seen as politically and ideologically provocative (Vukičević 2013: 4).

The divisions along ethnic and entity fault lines are reflected in the international support for the arts as well. While the Sarajevo art scene received extensive international support in the immediate aftermath of the war, forming prominent institutions such as the Sarajevo Film Festival and the Soros Center for Contemporary Art, the art scene in Banja Luka (and Republic of Srpska in general) lagged 10 years behind, both in terms of forming and entering the international stage (Vukičević 2013: 5). International academic research of BiH’s post-war cultural production also embodies this divide. While the voices of Sarajevo and other FBiH artists – particularly those whose work is focused on the war– have been amplified by a sizable body of research, academic scholarship on the art scene of the Republic of Srpska is almost entirely produced by local authors and virtually invisible in international circles.

The post-war art scene is one of the rare domains in BiH, where women’s participation and status has increased in comparison to the Yugoslav era (Simmons 2010). Simmons (2010: 4) emphasizes a turn from academic “aestheticism” to “engaged art” in BiH post-war art scene across the board, but most significantly amongst female artists. One of Bosnia’s most prominent female artists-activists, Alma Suljević, describes how the war changed her outlook on art:

“Art must take the position of doctor of society. We must recognize our problems. We must tell of its cancers. We must show people how they can make our society better. I mean to make it healthy.” (Simmons 2010: 20)

Prominent female artists in BiH shed light on the female experience of war. They raise awareness about the sexual, domestic, and institutional violence women endured, but also their adversity and endurance as they “take on a greater responsibility for their survival and the well-being of their families than ever before” (Simmons 2010: 3). The work of female artists has also been instrumental in the (re)construction of memory beyond the 1990s war. In 2015, the feminist Association for Culture and Art CRVENA in Sarajevo established an archive of the Anti-fascist Women’s Movement (AFŽ), documenting the forgotten role of women in the People’s Liberation Struggle during World War II and in the building of Socialist Yugoslavia. This project spurred a number of other feminist art initiatives across ethnic and national borders, including by artists in this study (s. Chapter 4).

In the Republic of Srpska, post-war art could similarly be described as ‘engaged’: most artists approach Bosnia’s past and present from a critical and subversive perspective (Vukičević 2013: 2). However, direct confrontations with the atrocities of war are notably absent. While

Sarajevan artists' war-related work often takes the form of testifying and witnessing, the Banja Luka scene addresses the conflict in more abstracted, universalized terms. They highlight the absurdities of different divisions in the BiH society – related to language, national symbols, and competing narratives of history – and portray them as imposed and extraneous (*ibid.*). The themes of social injustices and moral bankruptcy of a society in transition are omnipresent, yet artists are reluctant to express their own experiences of the war, conscious of the perception of their ethnicity in the international discourse (Vukičević 2013: 5). Although the artists in Republic of Srpska represent rare critical voices, an “active field for the detection of society’s anomalies” (*ibid.*), the examination of the war and the established perpetrator-victim discourse remains taboo.

1.3. Post-War Art in the BiH Transnational Community

Emigration data segregated by education shows a consistent “brain drain” from BiH: 79% of researchers, 81% of master’s degrees and 75% PhD holders have left the country between 1995 and 2005 (Uvalić 2005, as cited by Nikolić et al. 2010). There is no exact data on the number of emigrants in creative industries and arts. However, the interviewed artists confirmed that the culture of emigration applies to these industries even more than others due to dismal employment prospects and the state’s virtually non-existent cultural policy.

Mass emigration has put diaspora engagement for development firmly on the policy-makers agenda. Aside from fostering investment and remittances, governments in BiH and other countries in the region have focused on mitigating the ‘brain drain’ with knowledge exchange programs. The migration and diaspora research conducted in BiH is thus mostly focused on the possibilities of knowledge transfer (‘brain-gain’) and transnational entrepreneurship (s. for example Nikolić et al. 2010, MHRR 2015, Halilovich et al. 2018). Cultural workers have so far been notably excluded from the diaspora engagement efforts, perceived either as economically irrelevant or politically problematic, or both. It is the aim of this project to challenge this assumption and present the case for engaging the cultural producers across borders: fostering cooperation between BiH-based artists and those living and working abroad would create positive change not only for the country’s cultural development, but also its social, political, and economic life.

International research on BiH migrants, in Austria and other host-countries, focuses either on labor market integration or the role of religion in integration (s. for example Franz 2003, Mara et al. 2013, Asboth/Nadjivan 2017). Aside from a few individual case studies (Simmons 2010, D’Evie 2014, Karabegović 2014), the cultural life of the BiH diasporic communities and BiH cultural production in the diaspora remain largely unresearched. The common theme of the three

referred case studies is the commemoration ritual in the diaspora, looking at how the artists engage audiences around the world in remembrance of the Bosnian war. Interestingly, most of the diasporic artists who come up in international research are women. I will briefly mention the most prominent artists and projects of these case studies, before contextualizing the BiH diasporic community in Vienna.

D'Evie (2014) explores diasporic artistic practices related to transitional justice in the work of two Canadian artists of BiH origin, Diane Misaljevic and Allan Kosmajac. The artist duo has been creating public installations since the early 1990s, exploring cultural memory, reconciliation, and the invisibility of the survivors of human rights abuses in daily life. Their early collaboration mostly focused on the Yugoslav wars. In 2004, their immersive video and sound installation “Memento Mori” in the Church of The Holy Trinity in Toronto critiqued the Western media’s exploitation of the humanitarian disaster in Sarajevo (D’Evie 2014: 65). Other projects, such as “Faith in Facts” (2005) and “Remnants” (2007), are a “testament to the destruction of cultural memory and a haunting visual archive of the siege of Sarajevo” (Misaljevic and Kosmajac, 44art). In 2010, the artists expanded their focus from former Yugoslavia to unrecognized global atrocities, aiming for a “worldwide opening of cultural memory to previously unacknowledged violations of human rights” (ibid.).

For their project “Fragments” (2010), Misaljevic and Kosmajac invited survivors of genocide, torture, war crimes, and other human rights abuses to donate or loan up to five artefacts which represent their memory of the experience, either from its original site or from their experiences of living with the memories in Canada (D’Evie 2014: 66). A total of 418 survivors donated to the project, ranging from a train ticket to Auschwitz, to a passport photo of a refugee fleeing Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile, a necklace worn on the day of kidnapping by a gang in Mexico, a proof-of-life letter from a Bosnian concentration camp survivor. The artefacts were displayed in a grid of small white boxes on the ground of the Lamport Stadium in Toronto,



Figure 1: Misaljevic/Kosmajac, “Fragments”, Toronto 2010. Source: Fragments.ca.

resembling grave markers, in reference to the conversion of the Sarajevo Olympic Stadium into a cemetery during the siege (D'Evie 2014: 71).

D'Evie (2014: 69) sees “Fragments” as a paradigmatic example of the unique potential of diasporic art to bring about “cross-cultural” witnessing. By “decoupling transitional justice from national geographies”, Misaljevic and Kosmajac were able to engage with the “multiple rationalities and context-dependent identities” that make up the Canadian society:

“Through their Fragments public art project, Misaljevic and Kosmajac have provided a de-territorialized alternative: a mechanism for contextualizing micro-truths within a meta-structure, reinforcing participants’ simultaneous identification as survivors, as diaspora and as members of a cosmopolitan social and cultural community. In so doing, Misaljevic and Kosmajac have presented a challenge to the field of transitional justice, opening space for critical reconsideration of prevailing delimitations, in favour of an expanded concept, which better accommodates the fragmentation and dispersal of communities that ensues in situations of mass conflict and violence.” (D'Evie 2014: 78)

The concept of art as an alternative to transitional justice will be further discussed in the theoretical framework.

Karabegović (2014) looks at diaspora mobilization for remembrance in Sweden and the United States on the example of Aida Šehović’s project “Što te nema” (“Why aren’t you here?”), a travelling art installation commemorating the genocide that took place in Srebrenica in 1995. Since 2004, Šehović has performed the installation every year on the anniversary of the genocide, July 11th, in cities around the world such as New York, Toronto, The Hague, Istanbul, Stockholm, Burlington, Geneva, Boston, Chicago, and Zurich. The nomadic monument is created with the help of BiH diasporic communities. Karabegović (2014: 456) describes the installation:

“‘Što te nema’ lasts throughout the day each July 11th with coffee being ground and prepared as fildžan by fildžan (small porcelain cups that Bosnians drink coffee out of) are aligned on the ground. Once the coffee is ready, it is poured into džezve, handmade, traditional, bronze coffee pots used to serve coffee in the region. As each džezva of coffee is brewed, it is placed on the ground next to the cups. The strong smell of the coffee permeates the whole scene within an hour, inviting inquiry from those passing by. Upon inquiry, the artist or one of the volunteers approaches

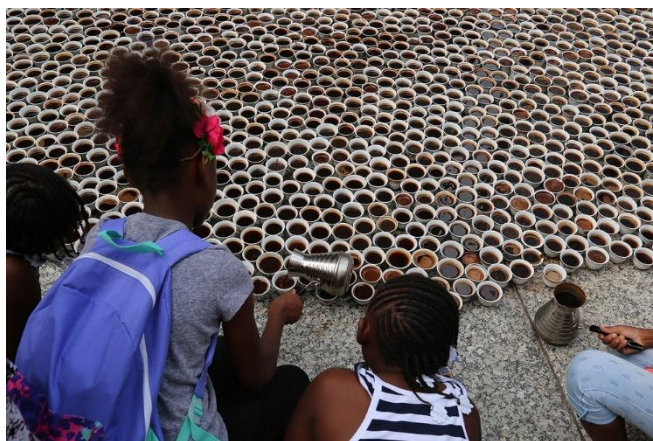


Figure 2: Aida Šehović, “Što te nema”, Chicago 2017.
Source: aidasehovic.com.

those who stop and invite them to reflect upon the absence of victims of genocide. They are then told that July 11th marks the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in BiH.”

Karabegović (2014: 456) finds that the commemoration practices in BiH diaspora diverge from those in the home country. Rather than exhibiting ‘long-distance nationalism’, as research of other diasporas has shown, BiH diaspora can transcend the ethnonationalist discourse, in part as a result of the diversity and policies of the host-countries (ibid.). In an environment of “superdiversity” (Perchinig 2018), where their daily lives are interlinked with people of all races, languages, and cultural backgrounds, the differences between themselves and their countrymen and -women begin to seem negligible. The host-society does not differentiate between different ethnicities of the BiH minority, allowing for a new solidarity to emerge and overpower divisions that might have been brought from home (Mijić 2019).

What these and other examples of BiH transnational art have in common is the critical and subversive approach towards the dominant ethnonationalist narratives of memory and identity in BiH. They expand the opportunities for BiH diasporic communities to participate in the (re)construction of their cultural memory and identity. They also foster social cohesion by engaging the host society in dialogue on issues they would otherwise feel detached from.

1.4. BiH Migration to Vienna: A Brief History

This research project contributes a small snapshot of cultural production from one of the main hubs of BiH emigration - Vienna, Austria. Due to its geographic proximity and imperial history, Vienna is home to one of the largest and rapidly growing BiH expatriate communities in the world and has been a gravitational point for Bosnia’s artists and intellectuals since the 19th century.

Habsburg history maintains that the Austro-Hungarian Empire never had colonies, but Clemens Ruthner (2018) argues that the ‘Eurocentric’ view of history obscures the recognition of BiH as an example of colonialism on European soil. According to Ruthner (2018: 3), BiH experienced both sides of Western colonialism of the 19th and 20th centuries under Austro-Hungarian rule: foreign domination, economic exploitation, and patronizing identity politics of the ‘civilizing mission’ on the one hand, and modernization of infrastructure, educational and legal systems on the other. He sketches several parallels of the Austrian conquest and rule of BiH which are constitutive of other Western colonialism (Ruthner 2018: 8-9):

- acquisition of territory through military conquest after a mandate provided by an international summit (Berlin Congress in 1878 ceded administration of the old Ottoman Vilayet Bosna to the Austro-Hungarian Empire),

- unresolved legal status within the empire (Bosnia was the only territory without parliament representation in Vienna or Budapest),
- indirect rule through local elites,
- large administrative complex dominated by foreigners,
- the establishment of an epistemic regime aiming to re-write a specific Bosnian version of the regional history to oppose the Serbian and Croatian historiographies,
- modernization (BiH served as a testing ground for technological experimentation),
- economic and military exploitation.

Austro-Hungarian rule attempted to pacify the nationalist tendencies in BiH by creating a unified Bosnian identity from the top-down (Ruthner 2018: 8). However, this “paternalistic policy” only served to create deeper division between the three religious groups (ibid.). The Catholic population in BiH was favored as an ally, while the other two groups, Muslims and Orthodox, were discriminated by the “ever-growing patronizing civil administration” (ibid.). As was the case in many other Western colonial powers, Austria-Hungary built significant infrastructure and implemented educational and legal reforms during its brief rule from 1878-1918. This modernization was the first step towards the creation of a civil society, which “enabled the colonized to overthrow foreign rule eventually” (Ruthner 2018: 3).

To justify the civilizing mission and subsequent status of Bosnians as second-class *k.u.k.* citizens, an Orientalist othering discourse had to be constructed. Bosnian people were portrayed as barbaric “bandits” and “cutthroats” at worst, and uneducated lazy primitives at best (Ruthner 2018: 8). Notions of the Balkans minorities as ‘lesser-than’ are still ingrained in the perception of ‘Yugos’ in Austria, as will be discussed later. Whether or not history acknowledges BiH as a colony of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is not the subject of this inquiry. However, this turbulent historical relationship – which culminated in the assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by a Bosnian student, leading to World War One and the end of Austro-Hungarian monarchy – is essential to the post-colonial positionalities of BiH female migrant artists in Vienna and distinguishes their work from other BiH diasporic art.

From the 19th century imperialism until today, Vienna has maintained its status as the higher education destination of choice for migrant students and intellectuals from BiH and the Balkans. Bosnia’s first PhDs were awarded at the University of Vienna: in 1910. to Safvet-beg Bašagić, a renowned turn-of-the-century poet, Orientalist, and politician, and in 1916. to Marija Kon, a Germanist and Slavist and one of the few Sarajevo Jews who survived the Holocaust (Memić 2016). Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, a Serbian linguist whose language reform forms the basis of today’s (highly contested) languages of the post-Yugoslav space (Serbian, Croatian,

Bosnian, and Montenegrin), was educated at the University of Vienna in the 19th century. His bust still stands in front of the house where he lived on Rasumofskygasse in Vienna's third district, a rare monument to the historical presence of the South Slavic minorities (and cultural workers!) in Vienna. In 1850, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić organized a meeting of prominent Serbian and Croatian linguists and writers in Vienna, which resulted in the Vienna Literary Agreement. The agreement adopted a set of guidelines for the development and standardization of a common language of Serbs and Croats, Serbo-Croatian, which remained the official language until the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 (Memić 2016). Vienna was also often a refuge for dissidents, intellectuals and artists from the Ottoman Empire to the Communist era. The significance of the city for the Balkans is reflected in the language itself; it is often said that Vienna is the capital of the Balkans and the term "Bečka Škola" ("Viennese school") established itself as a signifier of good education and manners.

Perchinig (2018: 29) differentiates between six waves of immigration to Vienna since World War II:

- "The admission of refugees from communist countries in Eastern Europe – 'ethnic Germans' from Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s, refugees from Hungary 1956, refugees from Czechoslovakia in 1968,
- Recruitment of 'guest workers' from former Yugoslavia and Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s,
- Limited labor migration and growing family reunification from former Yugoslavia and Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s,
- Refugee influx from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s, mixed with a resurgence of labor migration from Turkey, and growing migration from the former communist Eastern countries,
- Superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) in migration since the 2000s: Growth of migration from Germany, growth of migration from Eastern Europe ('Habsburg revisited'), growing migration from Asia and Africa.
- Growing refugee influx from Afghanistan, Iran and Syria since 2013/2014".

The demographic makeup of the BiH diasporic community in Vienna as it stands today and its perception within the host nation were predominantly shaped by two above mentioned immigration waves, the so-called "Gastarbeiter" ("guest worker") generation of the 1960s to 1970s and the refugee wave of the 1990s. Both were considered temporary; both have confirmed Phillip Martin's famous quip: "there is nothing more permanent than temporary migration" (Martin 2001).

The guest worker wave began in the 1960s, as the economic growth and labor shortage in Austria led to the creation of a temporary contract labor program, also known as the Raab-Olah Agreement (Morokvasić 1987, Mara et al. 2013, Hahn 2016, Lorber 2017). The first contracts were signed with Spain in 1962, Turkey in 1964, and Yugoslavia in 1966. In the first few years, mostly young men from the larger cities in the northern Yugoslav republics of Slovenia and Croatia came, followed after 1969 by an increasing number of women and low-skilled older migrants from rural communities in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia (Mara et al. 2013: 3, Lorber 2017: 169). The proportion of women in the foreign labor force in Austria rose from 19% to 31% between 1962 and 1973, mostly driven by an increased female labor migration from Yugoslavia (ibid.). Due to gender hierarchies on the job market, female guest workers were limited to low-skill, low-paid labor and faced marginalization and exploitation (Lorber 2017: 171). The stereotypes formed in this era, associating Ex-Yugoslav women with low-end professions, such as Putzfrau (cleaning *lady*) or house help, live on today in the Austrian society, despite the changed realities for Ex-Yugoslav women on the Austrian labour market.

At the peak of guest worker employment in 1973, a total of 226,000 foreigners worked in Austria with almost 80% of this group from Yugoslavia (Lorber 2017: 168). Nearly half of the Gastarbeiter were employed in Vienna (ibid.). The guest workers were expected to return to their countries of origin in annual rotations, but this system soon proved to be unfavorable for both sides (Castro Varela 2003: 15 - 16, as cited by Strasser 2018). The peak guest worker employment of 1973 coincided with the first oil price shock, after which the official recruitment came to a halt, and a new labor law was passed, The Aliens Employment Act of 1975 (Mara et al. 2013: 3). In the following ten years, the number of guest workers from Yugoslavia and Turkey halved, but was mostly compensated by clandestine and family migration (ibid.). By the 1980s, family reunification became common practice; the ‘temporary’ guest workers formed families, had children (‘second generation’) and grandchildren (‘third-generation’), growing the Yugoslav community to almost 200,000 in 1991 (Fassmann/Reeger 2008: 11). As Yugoslavia fell apart and the war broke out in the early 1990s, thousands of refugees came to Austria and many of them found a support network built by their relatives who arrived as guest workers (Franz 2003: 141, Hahn 2016: 34).

In the course of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, between 1992 and 1995, about 100,000 refugees came to Austria, the majority of whom (90,000) from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mara et al. 2013: 4). In 1992 alone, approximately 50,000 refugees arrived, which put the Austrian social welfare system under substantial pressure. The state reacted with the so-called “De-Facto Aktion”, which assigned the asylum seekers the status of ‘de-facto refugees’ rather than de-jure

refugees according to the 1951 Geneva Convention (Baltaci 2012, Franz 2003). They were granted temporary visas and eventually given working permits, which enabled 60,000 people to integrate into the labor market by 1998, when the protection expired (ibid.). The state provided health services, minimal social benefits and housing and lodging in camps or private accommodation, but approximately one-third of the new arrivals lived in mass camps for months and years without any contact to the local population (Franz 2003: 137).

Franz (2003) compares the experiences of Bosnian refugees in Vienna and New York and concludes that, while all refugees experienced a significant decrease in their status and quality of life, women were significantly more adaptable to the new reality and more willing to take any employment opportunity. By constructing their identity around their focus on the wellbeing of their children and families instead of ethnonational identity markers, they were able to build social networks with the previous generations of Yugoslav guest worker immigrants regardless of their ethnicity, as well as with “well-established Austrian individuals who provided assistance and advocacy” (Franz 2003: 141). Approximately two-thirds of the 90,000 refugees remained in Austria (Baltaci 2012).

1.5. BiH Transnational Community in Vienna Today

In the 1990s, Vienna was significantly less diverse than it is today, with immigrants from Turkey and Yugoslavia forming by far the largest minorities in an otherwise relatively homogenous society (Franz 2003, Mara et al. 2013, Perchinig 2018). Although many Austrians were extremely generous and welcoming towards the BiH refugees in the 1990s, in some instances even taking them into their own homes (Franz 2003), the overall animosity towards a growing immigrant population was inevitably directed towards the two largest migrant communities, the Turks and the so-called ‘Yugos’. Since most immigrants of the guest-worker wave came from poorly educated and rural backgrounds, the Yugoslav diasporic community was more socio-economically homogenous before the BiH war. In contrast, those who came in the wave of forced migration in the 1990s were significantly more diverse and more educated, coming from both urban and rural areas (Mara et al. 2013, Mijić 2019). The influx of student and economic migrants in recent decades has additionally increased the socioeconomic diversity of the BiH diaspora (ibid.).

The most recent influx of refugees to Austria in 2015 and the overall greater diversity of the city has changed perceptions of migration. Ethnic discrimination is still regularly reported; the sharpened climate of islamophobia notably affects Muslims of the BiH community. However, the overall inter-ethnic relations to migrants from post-Yugoslav states are judged positively by the Viennese population (as is the case with the migrants from Germany, Eastern Europe and

Asia). The official narrative of the Austrian state portrays the Yugoslav minority as a success story of integration (Franz 2011, Mijić 2019), in contrast to the negative perceptions still dominating the views of migrants from Turkey, Africa and the Near East (Perchinig 2018: 55).

Migrant communities in the city remain spatially segregated (MA 18, Perchinig 2018). The districts in the western part of the city, once the working-class industrial suburbs of Vienna, today have the largest percentage of migrants and the largest proportion of third-country nationals (ibid.). According to the city's most recent data (MA17 2018), the largest number of BiH nationals live in the 10th district (ca. 6.8 thousand), followed by the 11th, 12th, 15th, and 16th districts (ca. 3 thousand each), making up 3 - 4% of the district's population in each of these areas. These districts are home to a large share of migrants from other post-Yugoslav republics as well, most notably Serbia. In the more central districts (2nd to 9th), the share of BiH residents is around 2% (districts 2, 3, and 5) and 1% (districts 4, 6, 7, 8, 9), in correlation with the housing market prices. The spatial concentration of migrants from former Yugoslavia came about during the *Gastarbeiter* era. In the 1960s, the city provided housing for guest workers in former industrial districts (Perchinig 2018). Paired with below-average income and ethnic discrimination on the private housing market, this housing policy resulted in the high spatial concentration of the Yugoslav and Turkish minorities in urban neighborhoods with low-quality housing, most notably in Vienna's 16th district, Ottakring (Fassmann/Reeger 2008, Franz 2011, Mijić 2019).

The spatial presence of the Yugoslav minority in Vienna is associated with a number of stereotypes about the 'Yugo' community. The most prominent example is the Ottakringer Strasse in Vienna's 16th district, referred to as the Balkan Meile (Balkan Mile), lined with businesses catering to the migrant population from the post-Yugoslav space and Turkey. Due to its prominence and density, this street has come to dictate the perception of the Balkans in Vienna: kitschy bars with blacked-out windows playing turbo-folk music, grill restaurants offering stereotypical food like ćevapčići and pljeskavica, idle young men clad in sweatpants and toxic masculinity. Ottakringer Strasse is also the meeting point between newcomer immigrants, the second and third generation who still maintain a close connection to the homeland of their parents and grandparents (Asboth/Nadjivan 2017: 190). However, the first-generation of the intellectual class, including the artists in this study, find this image of their culture to be a diasporic construct and struggle to move past its banalizations.

Ana Mijić (2019:2) analyzed the social cohesion within the BiH diasporic community of Ottakringer Strasse and found multiple "symbolic boundaries" at play: "Balkanized" symbolic boundaries between the Austrian majority and the Ex-Yugoslavian minorities alongside the symbolic boundaries of ethnicity and "milieu" within the diasporic community itself. For Mijić

(2019: 13, citing Krasny 2015), the ambivalence of the symbolic boundary between the Austrian majority and the ex-Yugoslavian immigrants and their descendants is embodied in the term 'Balkan Meile', which embraces the "positive stereotypes of a consumable Balkan (e.g. nightlife, gastronomy, music) and the negative stereotypes of crime and danger". Her study finds this ambivalence both in the media discourse of Ottakringer Strasse and in everyday communication with its Austrian residents. In the eyes of the Viennese society, the 'Yugo' minority represents "a sphere between the own and the foreign", neither complete strangers nor "full-fledged members of the Austrian in-group", a semi-colonial, semi-civilized and semi-oriental "incomplete self" (Mijić 2019: 13-14, citing Todorova 2009: 194).

In light of being Othered by the Austrian majority, young people within the BiH (and Ex-Yugoslav) diaspora elect to emphasize the difference between themselves and the "decent and anemic" Austrians (Slavoj Žižek, as cited by Mijić 2019: 15) by leaning into the stereotypes and celebrating the culture of turbo-folk. Although the origins of turbo-folk are connected to the rise of ethnonationalism in former Yugoslavia (cultural studies deem turbo-folk "the soundtrack of Yugoslavian collapse", Mijić 2019: 14), turbo-folk has transitioned in the post-war era from ethnonationalist propaganda to the glorification of consumerism, drugs, sex and alcohol, thus making it palatable to diasporic communities of all ethnic identities around the world. However, while it may contribute to the erosion of ethnic boundaries in the diaspora, turbo-folk subculture draws a different internal border of education, class and "milieu" (Mijić 2019: 15):

"Within the interviews conducted with university graduates, artists or other members of the upper-middle class, a huge need was exhibited to differentiate themselves from the turbo folk phenomenon and its accompanying Ottakringer Straße nightlife. By emphasising their own 'more sophisticated' taste in, e.g. music and fashion, they express their social position in terms of a specific lifestyle and distinguish themselves from less privileged members of society (Bourdieu, 2000), e.g. 'the children of former guest workers', 'the working class' and 'the ones who grew up without real culture'".

The BiH diasporic community today is thus extremely heterogeneous, not only along ethnic lines (as is most often emphasized), but also in terms of class, education, and generation (Asboth/Nadjivan 2017). In this context, generation does not refer to age, but rather the migration wave and circumstances in which one has come to Vienna: the guest worker generation, refugee generation, second and third-generation (immigrants' children and grandchildren), post-war students and young professionals. Previous research of the BiH diaspora in Austria has found strong social ties with their homeland shared by all members of the BiH community regardless of other divides (Franz 2011, Asboth/Nadjivan 2017, Mijić 2019). Asboth and Nadjivan (2017: 212) summarize the BiH diasporic condition in Austria: "they seem to be able to adapt everywhere, but share the intimate feeling of belonging nowhere".

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The challenge and the reward of assembling a theoretical framework for this project is its cross-cutting nature. Studying the role of female transnational art in the construction of Bosnian cultural memory and identity requires casting a wide net over several different fields, many of which are in themselves transdisciplinary: gender studies, cultural studies, memory and trauma studies, diaspora and transnationalism research, and development studies. The first task then is to outline the boundaries of this research by defining how the terms ‚diaspora’ and ‚transnationalism’ will be used. Next, I will bring these concepts in dialogue with theories on cultural production, identity, memory, and trauma to discuss how they relate and constitute each other in transnational art.

2.1. Diaspora

The term ‘diaspora’ is used in the BiH media to signify the country’s emigrant population regardless of status, reasons for migrating, relationship to their country of origin, and even citizenship. In day-to-day communication amongst the ‘sedentary’ population, it is used as the demarcator between ‘us’ and ‘them’, those who left and those who stayed, laden with ascribed stereotypes surrounding the emigrants’ lifestyle. Comparatively, the term ‘diaspora’ in English or German is almost exclusively confined to academic circles, which in itself speaks volumes about the omnipresence of emigration in the contemporary BiH discourse.

The definition of ‘diaspora’ (from Greek διασπορά = dispersion, scattering of seeds) is the subject of an ongoing discussion in social sciences, the extent of which is beyond the scope of this paper (s. for example Smith 1986, Safran 1991, Tölölyan 1996, Cohen 1997, Brubaker 2005). Brubaker (2005: 3) reports of the proliferation of the term ‘diaspora’ in academic and public discourses since the late 1980s from the limited use of the term to signify the paradigmatic cases of the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek dispersion, to diasporas as conceptualizations of linguistic and religious ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983) without any reference to a common conceptual homeland.

The review of the past three decades of diaspora research suggests two main approaches to the concept of diaspora. The first is a ‘positive’ approach, whereby central features of a diasporic community are identified from several case studies (s. for example Safran 1991, Tölölyan 1996, Cohen 1997, Turino 2004). The second approach is ‘negative’, defining the diaspora against the nation-state as its alternative or antithesis (Clifford 1994).

Brubaker identifies three core elements that are widely understood by researchers to be constitutive of diasporas:

1. dispersion across state borders;

2. homeland orientation as a source of value, identity, and loyalty;
 3. boundary maintenance - preservation of a distinctive identity in the host society
- (Brubaker 2005: 5, citing Smith 1986, Safran 1991, Tölölyan 1996, Cohen 1997).

Broader interpretations assign the term 'diaspora' to minority communities formed through any type of dispersion across state borders, regardless of the conditions in which it took place (Brubaker 2005: 5). Strict interpretations, however, insist that only those communities which have resulted from forced or otherwise traumatic dispersion can be considered diasporic (ibid.). Cheran (2004: 7) criticizes the common indiscriminate use of the term 'diaspora' to signify all emigrants of a certain origin, arguing that it obscures the vast differences in status, experience, and power between emigrants who chose to live in a different country and those who were forcefully displaced. Instead, the groups made up of voluntary migrants should be referred to as 'transnational communities'. Cheran (2004: 4) offers a memorable distinction between transnational communities and diasporas: "transnationalism is a condition of *living*", whereas diaspora is "a condition of *leaving*". Unlike transnational communities, diasporas are bound by the collective memory of pain, dispossession, and trauma, as well as by diasporic consciousness, a degree of alienation and insulation from their host societies, and the desire to return (Cohen 1997, Levitt 1998, Cheran 2004, Brubaker 2005).

The second criterion, homeland orientation, is what distinguishes diasporas and transnational communities from cosmopolitan cultural formations, which share the dispersion but not the recognition of an original source of identity (Turino 2004: 5). Many researchers take homeland orientation further and identify the desire to return, even if it remains on an abstract, mythical level as a crucial aspect of diasporic communities (Safran 1991; Clifford 1994; Sheffer 1997, Abdelhady 2001). Stuart Hall (1994: 235), on the other hand, rejects the definition of diasporic identity through the desire to return as "the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising form of 'ethnicity'". For Hall, the diasporic experience is not defined by essence or purity, but instead through 'hybridity', "a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference" (ibid.). The concept of hybridity is a key aspect of diasporic art and will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

A more useful line of argumentation differentiates between diasporas and transnational communities based on the qualities of their transnational ties. While the paradigmatic cases of diasporas, such as the African-American and Jewish communities, base their shared homeland orientation in history, memory, and myth, rather than in present ties to their countries of origin, transnational migrants "engage freely in real networks linking them to their home country, this relationship is neither mythical nor visionary; it is lived through practices of everyday life" (Weinar 2010: 76).

With this theoretical framework in mind, I will refer to the artists in my study as transnational. However, the diasporic themes of cultural identity, trauma, memory, and homeland orientation remain relevant as my sample is purposefully limited to first-generation migrant artists who arrived in Austria after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. This distinction is crucial in limiting the field of study: I am interested in “real networks” (Weinar 2010: 76) and lived exchange with the country of origin and other diasporic sites relevant to the artists’ biographies, rather than the expressions of belonging to a “mythical” homeland (ibid.).

It is essential to keep the diversity of the transnational experience in mind when discussing migrant artists, since artists’ mobility is often taken for granted as a lifestyle choice of a cosmopolitan elite in a globalized world. This thesis is not interested in the individual experiences of artists who simply chose to pursue their career in a different country, but instead in the broader phenomenon of displaced cultural production, whereby mass emigration of artists and creatives (among others) leads to the formation of new hubs of cultural production outside of their country of origin.

2.2. Transnationalism

Transnationalism was introduced in 1994 by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, as a critique of ‘methodological nationalism’, the dominant paradigm in social sciences in which the nation-state is the primary, self-evident unit of analysis (Bailey 2001, Levitt 2012, Barglowski et al. 2014, as cited by De Jong/Dannecker 2018: 496). The term ‘transnationalism’ or ‘transnationality’ refers to the “processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of residence” (Basch et al. 1994:1).

Transnational social fields are understood as consisting of two interconnected elements (Faist 2008, as cited by Tan et al. 2018: 3): transnational identities (the subjective sense of belonging to the home and host societies, as well as to ethnic, religious, and other transnational communities) and transnational relations (the economic, political, sociocultural, and familial linkages between migrant communities and their homelands). In a similar vein, Glick Schiller distinguishes between transnational “ways of being” (everyday practices and social relations) and “ways of belonging”, the conscious ways in which loyalties are expressed (Glick Schiller 2003, as cited by Levitt/Jaworsky 2007: 133).

Transnationalism as a methodology rejects the “false dichotomy” in researching “what happens to immigrants once they arrive somewhere” separately from “what happens where they come from” (Levitt 2010: 149-150, Mazzucato 2010: 205). The term ‘transnational’ instead implies a transcendence of nation-state boundaries, “seeing those who leave and those who

remain as a single socio-economic and political field” (Cheran 2004: 6). Cultural production in transnational space as a site of construction and expression of transnational identities is imagined as a common “way of struggle”, built on the agency of artists at home and abroad, with the objective of emancipation and “self-production” of new political identities (Chambers/Johnson 2004: 28). In the case of the BiH female transnational artists, this emancipatory agency is reflected in the connections between feminist artistic practices across borders (s. Chapter 4).

Transnational conceptualizations of collective identity also aim at bringing about a paradigm shift – transcending nation-centered homogenizing discourses of immigrant assimilation in favor of a new post-national, de-territorialized notion of identity embodied by transnational communities (Clifford 1994, Brubaker 2005, Adamson/Demetriou 2007). This perspective sees diasporas and transnational communities as the antithesis to the territorial boundedness of the nation-state and its exclusive claims to citizens’ loyalties (Brubaker 2005: 8). The collective identities emerging from contemporary migration processes present a challenge to the presumed relationship between “states as actors, institutions, and territories” and collective identities as “quasi-independent structures of meaning” (Adamson/Demetriou 2007: 490). However, as Turino (2004: 5) points out, the logic behind belonging to a diaspora is not unlike that of belonging to a nation: both are constructed identity units rather than objective entities. Both are dependent on people subjectively uniting around shared emblems, expressive cultural practices, and symbolic discourses, “all of which are realized, importantly, in highlighted public form through art” (Turino 2004: 7).

Recent work in transnational studies has called for bringing transnationalism in dialogue with other fields of study, such as gender, identity, integration, etc. (De Jong/ Dannecker 2018: 496). Heading this call, this study transposes concepts from cultural, memory and trauma studies into transnational space using methods from biographical research. The following section will introduce insights from post-colonial diaspora studies and biographical research to discuss how transnational and diasporic identities are negotiated and situated within broader social contexts.

2.3. Transnational Identities, Transnational Biographies

The construction of cultural identities in transnational art is inextricably linked to the artists’ negotiation of their individual identity through their work. In the case of transnational artists, this negotiation involves processes of acculturation, as they position themselves between two (or more) cultures in which their biographies unfold. For Hall (Hal/DuGay 1996: 310), diasporic identifications are about hybridity, “living in translation”, as individuals “learn to inhabit two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them”. To understand the implications of transnationalism on identity formation, and vice versa, how

individual biographical work constructs transnational space, this section will briefly discuss the insights of post-colonial diaspora research and biographical research, specifically its recent applications to transnational migrants' biographies.

Postcolonial studies have shown how 'Third World' immigrants negotiate their cultural identities as citizens of the 'First World', while retaining a strong identification with the culture of their home country in the process of acculturation (Bhabha 1994, as cited by Bhatia 2002). Bhatia (2002) critiques the earlier linear models of acculturation and conceptualizes it instead as a dialogical process, in which immigrants and their children constantly move back and forth in the negotiation of their "multiple, and often conflicting, voices, histories and *I* positions" (Bhatia 2002: 57). In contrast to the linear models of acculturation, which emphasize replacing these multiple conflicting voices with a "set of voices that are integrated and harmonious with each other", the dialogical model embraces the conflicting '*I* positions' as an integral part of the diasporic self (Bhatia 2002: 73). The diasporic self is thus conceptualized as a "situated, negotiated, and contested" hybrid (ibid.), shaped by the power asymmetries between the various '*I* positions' in the context of the "cultural and political issues of race, gender, colonization and power that are present in the hostland and the homeland" (Bhatia 2002: 55). In the case of BiH female migrants in Vienna, the conflicting '*I* positions' often involve negotiation at the intersection of gender and religion between the two societies' conflicting views on Islam and Muslim women. The empirical chapter will further reflect how the artists' positionalities between different diasporic cultures influence the conceptualizations of BiH cultural identity in their artistic practice. Biographical research methods will be used to reconstruct the interviewed women's agency and its embeddedness in gendered notions of BiH cultural identity.

Identity negotiations are regarded in biographical research as a part of the process of constructing (transnational) biographies. Biographical research understands biographies as social constructs and examines the ways in which people "produce" a biography in different cultural contexts (Apitzsch/Siouti 2007: 6). The focus is on contextualizing individual biographies within a larger social and cultural context; to embed the biographical account into social macro-structures, rather than to reconstruct the "intentionality that is represented as an individual's life course" (Siouti 2017: 179, citing Apitzsch/Inowlocki 2000: 61). Biographies are seen as "radical documents of the sociality of the individual" (Apitzsch 1990: 90): they offer rich material for the analysis of people's problems and conflicts, but also their coping strategies within the social structures of their time. This allows for an investigation of the processes of change and identity construction (Siouti 2017: 179). Biographical research thus provides a theoretical and methodological link between individual identity and larger social contexts (and collective identities within it).

Building on the theoretical framework of biographical research, the concept of transnational biographies focuses on how people “produce” biographies in *transnational* cultural contexts and which patterns of biographical construction can be observed in the process of transnational migration (Siouti 2017: 181). Siouti (ibid.) argues that transnational biographies offer a unique source of insight into the “invisible, but very real, structures of the immigration society”, because they allow for patterns specific to the migrant experience to emerge from individual life stories. She conceptualizes these unique aspects of transnational biographies as “transnational life strategies”, subjective coping strategies employed by the migrants to “deal with being a migrant and with the expansion of action spaces” (Siouti 2017: 186). Since the focus of this study is primarily on the transnational artists’ ties to their country of origin, their biographies are used as a source of insight into the invisible structures of the *emigration* society. Biographical analysis looks for patterns in their emigration experiences that contextualize their individual life stories within the larger context of the mass emigration of intellectuals and cultural producers from BiH. Chapter 4 will elaborate on the strategies they employ in their work within the migration-induced expansion of their artistic “action spaces” (Siouti 2017: 186), as voices of resistance against the dominant patriarchal and ethnonationalist discourses of memory and identity in the BiH public sphere.

Recent work in transnational biographies has attempted to reinterpret the concept of transnational space from a biographical perspective. For Apitzsch and Siouti (2007: 19, citing Apitzsch 2003, 2006), transnational space is “‘overformatted’ by hegemonic relations and is simultaneously produced by the migration subjects’ biographical work and concretized in the structure of the migration biography”. The following chapters will discuss the concepts of cultural identity, memory, and trauma, as well as how these categories are represented and constituted in transnational cultural production.

2.4. Identity is Fluid

Cultural studies offer two key insights which form the foundation of this project’s theoretical framework. The first is the understanding of cultural identity (as well as of memory and trauma in their respective fields of study) as socially constructed: as an open-ended “production” rather than “an already accomplished fact” (Hall 1994: 222). The second is that art and cultural production do not merely represent cultural identity, memory, and trauma; they instead actively construct and constitute them by articulating meaning and positioning towards the narratives and discourses of the society.

The prefix ‘cultural’ in the new conceptualization of identity, memory, and trauma signals the break with the naturalistic understanding of these concepts in earlier social science, also

known as the 'cultural turn' (Hall 1994, Turino 2004). Though not explicitly theorized as such, social identities were treated in anthropology as unproblematic homogenous wholes, "allowing scholars to discuss entire groups of individuals as if they felt and acted with one mind" (Turino 2004: 8). The constructivist 'turn' came about against the backdrop of liberation movements against colonialism, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the sexual revolution. In close connection to social movements, post-colonial thinkers exposed the power imbalances inherent in the established concepts of identity and sought to destabilize them by insisting on multiplicity over uniformity and agency over determinism.

Anti-essentialist deconstruction of ethnic, racial, and national concepts of identity thus became the dominant paradigm across a variety of disciplines in the 1980s and 1990s (Hall/DuGay 1996, Turino 2004, Chambers/Johnson 2004). For Stuart Hall, collective identity is not an essence shared by people with a common history, but a fluid positioning endowed with agency: "Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall 1994: 225). Identity, therefore, is no longer seen as inherited and inescapable, but rather as a resource for strategic action, ever-changing, and eternally negotiable (Turino 2004).

However, as Stuart Hall points out in his 1996 essay "Who needs identity?", the deconstructivist approach did not replace the established concepts of identity with reconstructed ones, leaving it in operation "under erasure, in the interval between reversal and emergence, an idea which cannot be thought in an old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all" (Hall/DuGay 1996: 2).

Building on Stuart Hall's theory, Turino (2004: 8) negotiates a middle ground between the former positivist approach and the postmodern erasure of identity as an analytical category. According to Turino, identity is the result of selecting and emphasizing certain 'habits' for the representation of self to oneself and to others, such as learning to "walk like a man", "think like an anthropologist", "act like an American" (ibid.). Individual and collective identities are hereby seen as inextricably linked, both emerging from a social context and in communication with others. The term 'habit' is used loosely to refer to the different social constructs reinforced by ourselves and others in everyday behaviors, including habitual modes of thought and practice, such as racism and sexism. The habitual theory of identity thus acknowledges that identity is socially constructed, but also insists that habits and identities are real forces which are not easy to change or to control. Habits emerge from everyday life, they are created in a specific historical context, they have material effects and over time gain a certain stability, which takes conscious effort to destabilize (Turino 2004: 9).

Applying Turino's understanding of identity to the context of BiH means acknowledging the powerful material consequences of post-war collective identities in shaping the political landscape, while at the same time understanding them as recent constructs, resulting from conscious efforts to change and control older modes of habitual thinking. Within Yugoslavia, BiH was the most ethnically diverse republic and one in which inter-ethnic marriage and social ties between people of different religious backgrounds were fostered the most (Kolind 2008). My interviews with the female artists born and raised in BiH affirm Lovrenović's (2015) claim that the habit of living with diversity was one of the strongest identifying factors of the Bosnian experience before the fall of Yugoslavia (s. Chapter 1: Context). The conscious efforts of ethnonationalist identity politics brought about the shift from hybridity and an egalitarian, multicultural solidarity ('brotherhood & unity') towards singular identities reduced to ethnicity and the formation of new habits mostly tied to religion, which was all but forbidden in the Yugoslav society. Another widely referenced example of identity-forming habits fostered in the post-Yugoslav context is the conscious introduction of new (and sometimes archaic) words into the everyday use of language to differentiate different ethnic groups from one another. A post-colonial, emancipatory view of the contemporary BiH identity must expose these identities as social constructs, while also acknowledging the context of collective trauma in which they were constructed, as will be elaborated later in connection to Jeffrey C. Alexander's theory of cultural trauma (Alexander et al. 2004).

Acknowledging such ruptures and discontinuities in individual and collective identities is only possible if we understand identity as a process, rather than an inherited fact (Hall 1994). For Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 112), the fluidity and open-endedness of collective identity is what renders social action possible: different actors struggle to assert their articulation of the meanings that "bind the social together" on the "battleground of identity" (ibid.). This metaphorical battleground is usually conceptualized within the borders of a nation-state as a power struggle for national identity. This paper expands the concept to include actors operating outside of the nation-state: female migrant artists as the resistance to patriarchal and ethnonationalist discourses on the transnational battleground of Bosnian identity.

To signal the paradigm shift from a naturalistic view of identity to the discursive approach, Hall proposes replacing the concept of 'identity' with the concept of 'identification', not because the latter is less problematic than the former, but because it signals an open-endedness of the process of articulation. While identification is "constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with a person or a group, [...] it is not determined in the sense that it can never be finally 'won' or 'lost', 'sustained' or 'abandoned' (Hall/DuGay 1996: 2). Identification is never finished; it is always "in process" (ibid.).

As a Caribbean British sociologist, Hall (1994: 231) draws on his own experience to illustrate the fluid nature of identity and the role of discourse in its continuous morphing:

“When I was growing up in the 1940s and 1950s as a child in Kingston, I was surrounded by the signs, music and rhythms of this Africa of the diaspora, which only existed as a result of a long and discontinuous series of transformations. But, although almost everyone around me was some shade of brown or black (Africa ‘speaks’!), I never once heard a single person refer to themselves or to others as, in some way, or as having been at some time in the past, ‘African’. It was only in the 1970s that this Afro-Caribbean identity became historically available to the great majority of Jamaican people, at home and abroad. In this historic moment, Jamaicans discovered themselves to be ‘black’ - just as, in the same moment, they discovered themselves to be the sons and daughters of ‘slavery’”.

Hall (1994: 231) goes on to elaborate on the role of art and cultural production in making these new aspects of identity available to the Jamaican collective:

“This profound cultural discovery, however, was not, and could not be, made directly, without ‘mediation’. It could only be made through the impact on popular life of the post-colonial revolution, the civil rights struggles, the culture of Rastafarianism and the music of reggae – the metaphors, the figures or signifiers of a new construction ‘of ‘Jamaican-ness’”.

Hall’s studies of Jamaican cultural identity hold four key elements of this paper’s theoretical framework:

1. **the role of memory in collective identification** (Jamaican collective identity was profoundly altered as slavery entered the narratives of their collective memory),
2. **the effects of trauma on the collective sense of self** (the historical trauma of slavery became the marker of unity and particularity between black Jamaicans and Others),
3. **the role of art and cultural production in identity construction** (the ‘discovery of Blackness’ was mediated through music and pop-culture), and
4. **the specific conditions of diasporic identity construction** (the complexities of multiple identifications and belongings).

The following chapters will elaborate on the relevant theoretical concepts regarding these four points. First, I will discuss Jan and Adelaida Assman’s theory of cultural memory and Jeffrey C. Alexander’s theory of cultural trauma, as the most referenced work in their respective fields (memory and trauma studies). I will then return to Hall and other theorists to elaborate on the constitution of identity, memory, and trauma in art. Lastly, the theories from cultural, memory, and trauma studies will be juxtaposed against the insights from diaspora and transnationalism research in connection to cultural production within diasporic communities.

2.5. Cultural Memory

Cultural memory studies seek to explain how collective memory is socially constructed and how it intersects with individual and collective cultural identities. The concept of ‘*mémoire collective*’ was first developed in the 1920s by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and art historian Aby Warburg independently of one another (Assman 1995: 125). What their “otherwise fundamentally different approaches” had in common was the rejection of the previous biological or racial conceptualizations of collective memory in favor of a socially constructed cultural framework (ibid.).

Halbwachs’s seminal contribution to the field was the understanding of memory as a social phenomenon (Coser 1992, Assmann/Czaplicka 1995, Erll 2008). His central thesis was that the human memory is always situated within a collective context: individual memories are inherently shaped, recalled and triggered by socio-cultural settings, which he deemed ‘*cadres sociaux de la mémoire*’ or ‘social frameworks of memory’ (Erll 2008: 8). Halbwachs was criticized by his contemporaries for “simply transferring the concepts from individual psychology to the level of the collective” (Erll 2008: 1). Some scholars still argue today that the broad term ‘collective memory’ brings unnecessary confusion into an already crowded field of well-established concepts such as ‘myth’, ‘tradition’, and ‘individual memory’ (ibid.). However, Erll (2008: 2) argues that it is precisely the “umbrella quality” of this term that has the potential to open up a transdisciplinary dialogue and reveal intersections between such concepts as ancient myths and individual memory of recent events.

Another contested point of Halbwachs’ legacy is his insistence on the clear delimitation between memory and history. He conceived history as abstract, totalizing, and “dead,” and of the memory as particular, meaningful, and “lived” (Erll 2008: 6). Erll (2008: 7) criticizes this binary approach as emotionally charged and unfruitful and suggests replacing the opposition between memory and history with the notion of “different modes of remembering”. Rather than focusing only on *what* is remembered, modes of remembering underscore the importance of *how*, as different ways of remembering by different groups construct and assign diverse meanings to the same event:

“A war, for example, can be remembered as a mythic event (‘the war as apocalypse’), as part of political history (the First World War as ‘the great seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century’), as a traumatic experience (‘the horror of the trenches, the shells, the barrage of gunfire,’ etc.), as a part of family history (‘the war my great-uncle served in’), as a focus of bitter contestation (‘the war which was waged by the old generation, by the fascists, by men’). [...] Myth, religious memory, political history, trauma, family remembrance, or generational memory are different modes of referring to the past. Seen in

this way, history is but yet another mode of cultural memory, and historiography its specific medium". (Errl 2008: 7)

Similarly to Hall's concepts of identity and identification, this approach is rooted in the understanding of memory as fluid: the past is neither given nor fixed, it is instead a process of continuous re-construction and re-presentation (Errl 2008: 7). These two key insights into collective memory, memory as socially constructed (1) and a fluid process (2) are complemented by Assmann's theory of cultural products as carriers of collective memory to form the foundation of my thesis: **neither cultural identity nor memory in the post-war, post-socialist BiH are given facts (as the ethnonationalist discourses posit), rather they are socially constructed and can be re-constructed and re-presented through cultural production.**

Jan and Alaida Assmann's concept of 'kulturelles Gedächtniss' (cultural memory) resides exclusively in the realm of objectivized culture, whereby cultural products from the past - whether it is high art, or posters, stamps, costumes, and customs - become carriers of "mnemonic energy" (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 128-129, citing Aby Warburg). They further developed Halbwachs' theory by introducing 'cultural memory' as an additional category delimited from 'communicative memory' and history as a science. Whereas Halbwachs' 'mémoire collective' operates in the realm of everyday communication through the practices of oral history, which for Assmann constitutes the field of communicative memory (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 126), cultural memory operates on the level of the object (the product of specialized cultural work). Unlike cultural memory, communicative memory is characterized by "a high degree of non-specialization, reciprocity of roles, thematic instability, and disorganization" (ibid.).

Cultural memory, on the other hand, is constituted within cultural objects produced by "specialists" in an "organized" way (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 131). While communicative memory is produced in the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by the distance from the everyday. Its temporal horizon is unlimited, sometimes stretching back thousands of years into the past, and its production is dependent on a specialized practice, "a kind of 'cultivation'" (ibid.). Assmann insists that the relationship to the group and the reference to contemporary identity, as claimed by Halbwachs, does not stop once "living communication crystallizes into objectivized culture" (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 128). Instead, this 'crystallization' of communicated meaning is the prerequisite to its transmission into the culturally institutionalized heritage of society, which provides markers of identity and belonging (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 130):

"The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity".

Understanding how the cultivation of cultural memory informs identity and belonging is particularly relevant in post-conflict societies, where both memory and identity are contested. As Halbwachs pointed out, collective memory is always selective: “various groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behavior” (Coser 1992). Group identities are thus formed based on remembering certain things and forgetting others *together* (Goldfarb 2017: 283). However, different groups remembering differently provides inexhaustible fuel for political conflict (ibid.). Goldfarb (2017) presents both the positive and the negative sides of these two aspects of memory. Drawing a parallel to individual memory, he shows that although selectivity is inherent to memory (we must forget some things to remember others), it can also foster delusion as much as enlightenment. Remembering differently can open new debates and make room for political action for historically oppressed groups to highlight their side of history (Goldfarb 2017: 292). The efforts of feminist art in post-war BiH to bring attention to the forgotten and denied war crimes against women and assimilate them into cultural memory are an example of such political action. However, as the Aboriginal Canadian activist George Erasmus eloquently argued: “Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created” (Charles 2019).

2.6. Constructing Trauma

For Alexander et al. (2004:1), community (re)building in the wake of a large-scale painful event is conditional on the process he describes as “trauma creation”. To socially construct trauma means to cognitively identify the existence of human suffering, take responsibility for it, and allow for solidary relationships to form which enable the members of one group to share in the sufferings of others (ibid.). Earlier social research saw trauma as unproblematic, a natural and even rational response to sudden change (Alexander et al. 2004: 3). Cultural trauma theory challenges this naturalistic understanding by arguing that an event does not become traumatic as a direct consequence of an objective reality of a group experiencing pain. What causes trauma rather is the “abrupt dislodging” of the “collective patterns of meaning”, whereby the “acute discomfort enters the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity” (Alexander 2004: 10). The relationship between cultural trauma and collective identity is the analytical linchpin of Alexander’s theory: “no threat to group identity, no cultural trauma” (Steensland 2005: 2).

Diverging from earlier trauma theory, Alexander (2004: 11, citing Max Weber) emphasizes the role of specific actors or ‘carrier groups’ endowed with ‘meaning-making’ in the process of ‘trauma creation’:

“Collectivities do not make decisions as such; rather, it is agents who do (Sztompka 1991a, 1993a; Alexander 1987; Alexander, Giesen, Munch, and Smelser 1987). The persons who compose collectivities broadcast symbolic representations —characterizations — of ongoing social events, past, present, and future. They broadcast these representations as members of a social group. These group representations can be seen as ‘claims’ about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply. The cultural construction of trauma begins with such a claim (Thompson 1998). It is a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstitution”.

Alexander (2004: 12) likens the process of cultural trauma creation to a speech act, whereby the carrier group is the speaker and the broader public is the audience. Carrier groups are found in different institutional arenas: religious, legal, scientific, bureaucratic, and importantly, in the “aesthetic arena” of cultural production (ibid.).

2.7. Construction of Identity, Memory, and Trauma in Art

The previous sections on identity, memory, and trauma have discussed how these categories are continuously socially constructed and reconstructed through presentation and representation. Stuart Hall’s *cultural identity*, Assmann’s *kulturelles Gedächtnis*, and Alexander’s *cultural trauma* all emphasize the crucial role that cultural production and material cultural heritage play in the processes of constructing collective identity, memory, and trauma. This section will start by discussing how the term cultural production is used and who is considered a cultural producer in the context of this study, followed by a brief excursion into the semiotic theory of identity construction through art. Finally, I will reflect the emancipatory power of art in negotiating transnational identities, as well as post-conflict memory and trauma.

We all participate in the production and reproduction of culture and cultural identity in our daily practices, “when we get dressed, go to work, communicate with others, organize our spare time, we rely on, reproduce and modify the norms and values underlying our social and cultural relations” (Klaus/Zobl 2012: 1). These processes are considered natural and self-evident; in other words, a more or less passive reproduction of cultural identity. Cultural production as an activity, on the other hand, is a conscious process of constructing and “organizing meaning as a site of power” (Chambers/Johnson 2004: 15). This entails an active contemplation of the “values, collective norms and invisible rules that guide our behavior” and the “social and cultural positioning of our activities” (Klaus/Zobl 2012: 1). This study is interested in this ‘active’ aspect of cultural production within the BiH transnational community in Vienna by female migrants who have chosen art (literature, music, visual art, performance art, film) as their primary occupation.

All cultural production starts and ends with everyday life (Chambers/Johnson 2004: 35). Informed by their everyday experiences (or ‘habits’ in the sense of Turino’s concept of identity), specialist cultural producers make representations in the forms of different cultural products, which cultural studies refers to as ‘texts’. The texts are read under specific cultural conditions and their interpretation influences the everyday life of the readers, potentially changing the ways in which they see themselves and others (ibid.). Art, therefore, does not merely represent cultural identity, memory, or trauma, but instead actively constructs and constitutes them. With Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) ‘battleground of identity’ in mind, let us look at the factors that give art the power “to affect and alter the way we see ourselves and others in our everyday lives” (Turino 2004: 10).

First, art is by nature a **public (social) form of communication**; it does not exist in isolation from its audience. Indeed, the appreciation of a certain art form can in itself provide a basis for collective identities (subcultures). Secondly, the artistic frame suggests an **emotionally heightened experience**; it indicates that “something special is being expressed in a mode different from everyday interaction” (Turino 2004: 10). As Ramachandran and Hirstein (1999: 16) remind, “the purpose of art is not merely to depict or represent reality, but to enhance, transcend, or even to *distort* reality”. Consciously or unconsciously, the artist is always **selecting** a certain aspect of everyday life and **amplifying** it (ibid.). Finally, art deploys **symbols and metaphors** rather than literal representation; it engages the audience into an open-ended process of **questioning and (re)interpretation**.

Using the semiotic theory of Charles S. Pierce, Turino (2004: 10-11) identifies two types of semiotic processes operating most prominently in art, which differentiate artistic construction of meaning from everyday communication: icons and indexes. Icons are signs which operate through resemblance: a new idea is presented by assigning imaginary traits to a familiar sign as, for example, is the case in science fiction. Flying cars in science fiction resemble existing cars enhanced by artistic imagination. Movie monsters and aliens resemble life forms known to the audiences; they relate to their frame of reference while at the same time presenting new possibilities. Once a new concept is created in art against a backdrop of iconic similarity with things we already know, Turino argues, the conditions have been created to incorporate this new concept into everyday life. The process of identity creation through art unfolds the same way: once the imaginings of what a new nation, subculture or diasporic position might “look like, sound like and feel like” are made actual within the artistic frame, their incorporation into everyday life becomes possible (Turino 2004: 11).

Indexical signs are connected to what they represent through existential connections; they cannot exist without the signified (smoke is an index of fire, body language is an index of an

inner mood, a song or a rhythm is an index of the culture it originated in). They do not signify through resemblance like icons, but rather through the implication of the signified. While icons are interpreted as representing possibilities, indices are interpreted as *authentic* because of their direct connection to the actual (Turino 2004: 11). However, even though indices are intuitively understood, how they are interpreted is highly dependent on the context, the real individual and group experiences which form the frame of reference. The ambiguity and polyvalence in these indexical signs are an important aspect of identity articulation through art. These same indexical symbols are interpreted differently by people of different backgrounds and recognized as a common and bonding reference between people with shared experiences, such as a musical reference or a culturally-specific joke. While in everyday communication the iconic and indexical levels move to the background of awareness, artists can consciously bring specific indices of social groups to the foreground and construct icons and models of new hybrid identities (Turino 2004: 9).

Art can change the way we perceive others, but also the way we perceive ourselves: “once externalized through public artistic forms, the meanings subjectively produced become part of the environment that dialectically shape the emergent models of the self” (Turino 2004: 10). It has the ability to create resistance to the habitual modes of thinking and bring about new insights about ourselves and each other (Ramachandran/Hirstein 1999, Turino 2004). As a “crafted representation of the self and the environment”, art has the enormous potential to articulate aspects of identity and carve out “a strategic space in the social arena from which to speak” (Bartosik-Velez 2004: 61).

Cultural studies critically examine this enfranchising role of art as a source of power, difference, and emancipation (Chambers/Johnson 2004: 26). For Stuart Hall (1994: 237), art is not merely “a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists”, but rather a form of representation “able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak”. As Hall’s study of the Caribbean identity illustrates, the emancipatory power of art in connection with collective identity, memory, and trauma is particularly salient in the diasporic context. It can provide to the disenfranchised a platform to enter into dialogue with the rest of the society (Bartosik-Velez 2004: 61) to represent their circumstances and celebrate their difference. Through art, diasporic identities can be transformed from a source of marginalization and uprootedness into a source of empowerment and belonging.

Diasporic artists draw upon their own hybrid identities as a source of imagination to create new artistic expressions that employ icons and indices from various diasporic sites (Turino 2004:14). This results in authentic art forms which serve as a model for the constitution of new composite identities and contribute to the formation of new ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson

1983). Hip hop as the expression of the African American experience is one of the most prominent examples of such identity-forming diasporic art forms. Turino (2004: 18) illustrates the emancipatory potential of this process on the lesser-known example of the music produced by the Indian diaspora in the United States: “The creation of a music genre, that ‘sounds like’ the cultural combinations that they feel themselves to be - mixing Indian folk and film music with American youth music - provides young Indians both a self-affirming and empowering bond of commonality, and a public statement of their place in mainstream American youth culture”.

Diasporic art can contribute to the construction of identity and solidarity within minority communities in the host society. It can also communicate the migrant experience to non-migrant population and bridge the cultural divide within the immigration society (Abdelhady 2007: 41). However, there is significantly less research on the reach of diasporic art to the society of origin. Two interesting examples are found in the research on Albanian and Lebanese diasporic cultural production by respectively, Jane Sugarman and Dalia Abdelhady. Both cases refer to post-conflict societies affected by mass emigration and offer interesting parallels to BiH transnational art.

Sugarman (2004) shows how Albanian diasporic music constructed and conveyed to the audiences in the homeland an image of the diasporic experience as ‘gurbet’, émigré condition associated with loneliness, isolation, and suffering away from family and friends. At the same time, a different genre of Albanian diasporic music combines influences of various diasporic sites into a hybrid form which claims Albanian space in the European culture:

“By placing Western musical norms at the center of such songs, performers of muzika argetuese (popular music) signal their embrace of European modernity as their geographically ordained birthright. At the same time, by evoking folk elements they affirm their allegiance to nationalist ideals by locating their heritage in those musical styles that most distinguish Albanians from their neighbours” (Sugarman 2004: 35).

Lebanese diasporic artists in Dalia Abdelhady’s studies (2011) address discourses of memory and history in their homeland driven by an overwhelming desire to confront the Lebanese civil war and promote collective healing and unity: “their interest in participating in their homeland is based on the desire to challenge assumptions of Lebanese history and culture, pushing for the development of more collective forms of solidarity to overcome sectarian divisions” (Abdelhady 2011: 135). Placing the themes of displacement and belonging at the center of their work, Lebanese diasporic artists use personal narratives to negotiate new modes of belonging and counter rigid constructions of history and identity (Abdelhady 2011: 171).

Over the past few decades, both social theory and peace-building practice have argued for the emancipatory power of art in addressing trauma and negotiating conflicting memory

narratives in post-conflict societies. Goldfarb (2017) sees the unique power of art in the (re)construction of collective memory in its potential to inform memory beyond social clichés. If artistic production is “truly independent”, it cannot be reduced to a singular point of view: it opens the audience to the complex social condition of memory, “not providing easy answers but rather questions, alternative understandings and commitments” (Goldfarb 2017: 303). In his analysis of three prominent works of art dealing with collective memory (Tony Morrison’s novel “Beloved”, Paweł Pawlikowski’s film “Ida”, and Maya Lin’s Vietnam War Memorial in Washington DC), he demonstrates that art cannot resolve memory conflicts, but it can help us to “see them in a new light, to feel about them differently, to embrace alternative points of view, to live with and against them in surprising ways” (Goldfarb 2017: 298).

For Jasmina Husanović (2010), art represents a space free from the influence of the state in which the society can productively approach trauma and loss. It can provide survivors with a new, non-verbal communication tool to express unspeakable trauma. The ‘language of art’ supplements the failures of words, because everyday language belongs to those traumatic power relations (Husanović 2010: 59):

“We have to bear witness to trauma both outside and inside the vocabulary of power – the feeling of dislocation, both belonging and not belonging to the community with whose registers of communication we cannot politicize our own experience, but rather often merely bring ourselves back to the state of helplessness, ineloquence, and to a renewed betrayal of trust”.

Verbal expressions of trauma thus inevitably fall within the dominant discourse that reiterates the political status quo. Yet, those who witness are unable to “entirely avoid leaning on such a discourse, or a system of meaning altogether, even if it perpetually fails them” (Jelača 2016: 339). By treating trauma as an open-ended creative process, towards the politics of witnessing as the “politics of hope” (Husanović 2009: 114), art emerges as an alternative both to ethnonationalist attempts to own the trauma, and to the processes of transitional justice, which aim at imposing closure and “normalizing” the victims so that they could be depoliticized and reintroduced into the power structures of society (Husanović 2005: 61). For Husanović, only art can embody and articulate trauma’s rejection of closure, because it does not attempt to tame or suppress it, but rather encircles the gaping abyss of trauma and provides new and re-politicizing ways of addressing it (Husanović 2005: 64, translated by the author).

On the individual level, therefore, art has the potential to restore victims’ capacities to participate in reconciliation processes, access their emotions, and begin their healing processes (Husanović 2005, Naidu-Silvermann 2015, Savansukha 2015). On the collective level, art can serve as a temporary outlet from the hopelessness and despair of reality to foster imaginations of

alternate scenarios (Naidu-Silvermann 2015: 11). Participatory forms of art, such as theatre or spoken word, provide the necessary space for non-violent dialogue to facilitate empathy and cultural awareness necessary for reconciliation (ibid.). Art democratizes the nation-building processes usually reserved for political elites; it allows people to rediscover community in all its diversity and to “find a grave for the irreconcilable” (Savansukha 2015, citing Kalisa 2006: 517).

2.8. Gendered and Postcolonial Perspectives

Studying female migrant artists originating from a post-conflict society is inherently anchored in the feminist and post-colonial perspectives of identity, memory, and trauma, which seek to critically examine power structures in which these discourses are produced. Feminist and post-colonial critique starts from the epistemological notion that knowledge is never independent of its producers. The question ‘who?’ is central to this paradigm: who is producing knowledge (or in this case, culture) and the narratives of collective identity, memory, and trauma within it? Who is excluded from this production? Who is represented in these cultural products and who is invisible?

Knowledge and cultural production have throughout history been sites of male domination where female contributions have been subject to erasure (Evans et al. 2014: 196). Colonialism erased entire cultures, assimilating the colonized into its frameworks of cultural superiority. In this context, feminist and post-colonial scholarship in themselves represent forms of memory work, retrieving women and non-Westerners from oblivion as historical actors and recorders (Evans et al. 2014: 196, citing Chedgzoy 2007). The very existence of feminist and post-colonial scholarship “bears witness to the gendered and power-laden dynamics of remembering and forgetting” (ibid.). Cultural memory is always about power and is thus always contested: what a society chooses to remember and forget determines not only the past but also the present and the future of its power structures (Hirsch/Smith 2002, Goldfarb 2017). Gender, along with race and class, is an inescapable dimension of power relations and therefore inherent in the battles of cultural memory and hegemony, as gendered memory determines the configuration and development of gendered identities (Hirsch/Smith 2002, Reading 2014). Feminist lens foregrounds the dynamics of gender and power in the construction of cultural memory, but it also provides a critical perspective of cultural recall and forgetting, exposing privilege and disenfranchisement which determine which testimonies are heard and which ignored (Hirsch/Smith 2002: 11). Feminist research highlights how the official archives of history memorialize the experiences of the powerful and creates an alternate archive through art, ritual, performance, popular culture, and oral history as the “testimonies of the disenfranchised”, endowing cultural production with another dimension of emancipatory power (Hirsch/Smith

2002: 12). The field of women's studies thus becomes a form of *counter-memory* and feminist scholarship, literature, and art a means of redressing the official forgetting of women's histories (Hirsch/Smith 2002: 4, italics added).

Recent decades have seen intensified attempts of feminist scholarship to redefine culture from a female perspective through the inclusion of women's work, stories, and artifacts (Hirsch/Smith 2002: 3). Amidst an explosion of female literary and cultural production, "preoccupations with gendered politics of decolonization, exile, migration and immigration have given rise to questions about the archive and the transmission of memory across spatial and generational boundaries" (ibid.). While gendered perspectives have found a strong footing in the areas of memory studies related to individual memory, such as autobiographical literature or studies of sexual abuse, the scholarship on collective memory and trauma has been more resistant to gender differentiation among witnesses, particularly in the case of Holocaust memory (Hirsch/Smith 2002: 4, Reading 2014: 196).

Although the field of gender studies in BiH is still in its infancy, the work of Bosnian feminist philosopher and activist Jasmina Husanović provides a foundation for the emergence of a critical gendered perspective on trauma informed by, but certainly not limited to, the Bosnian female experience. Husanović emphasizes the potential of feminism to give rise to new ways of thinking memory and theorizing trauma, founded on the "imperative to 'act as a cultural (cum political) witness who turns trauma as experience into insight and whose innovative concepts (can give us) new tools with which to think'" (Husanović 2009: 100, citing Felman 2002: 8). For Husanović, this critical feminist politics of witnessing, rooted in "vernacular cosmopolitanism as a mark of the postcolonial experience" (Husanović 2009: 102, citing Bhabha 2002), begins from the 'face/body' as a site of trauma and memory: "Her 'face/body' is truly an alien life inhabiting the political communities of our times, or the trace of disappearing and coming worlds at the margins of the political. What is her voice, where is her space, how is her politics?" (Husanović 2009: 100). The focus on the specific 'face/body' and voice of BiH women who have experienced (post-)war and (post-)socialist losses provides an authentic Bosnian feminist lens ("vernacular") through which to view global systems of oppression ("cosmopolitanism"): "our focal point must be the material/symbolic body that has been de-faced, erased and/or violently made non-relevant in the operative biopolitical regimes (colonial, patriarchal, neo-liberal, capitalist, ethno-nationalist, heterocentric, and so on)" (Husanović 2009: 103).

The focus on real bodies, everyday histories, and their complexities is at the core of recent scholarship's calls for the 'decolonization of trauma' as resistance against ethnonationalist (and other groups') attempts to own trauma through simplistic narratives of victimization (Budryte 2016, Mijić 2017b). Budryte (2016:10) refers to this paradigm shift as the "disaggregation of

monumental trauma”. Whereas discourses of “monumental trauma” tend to present clear-cut perpetrators and victims, often assigning collective moral value along gender, ethnic, and national boundaries, decolonized theory of trauma seeks to move beyond the dichotomies and look for commonalities in different traumatic experiences on the micro-level (ibid.). For Budryte (2016: 10), decolonizing trauma also means questioning the power structures which make certain (post-colonial) stories heard and keep other stories hidden in the international circles, rather than uncritically accepting narratives of trauma produced by groups who self-describe (or are described by others) as non-Westerners.

Budryte (2016: 9) points to the power of art in disbanding the essentialization of women in war as victims of sexual violence or nurturing mothers. Analyzing the work of female writers from post-conflict, post-socialist contexts in Eastern Europe, she argues that art and literature can challenge these stereotypes by telling individual stories of women whose war-time lives diverge from “what is seen to be predictable and standard behavior”, “complicating [...] the warrior/victim myth” (Budryte 2016: 9, citing Mackenzie 2011: 65). One of the analyzed authors, Russian Nobel Laureate Svetlana Aleksievich, tells the stories of WWII female combatants in “War’s Unwomanly Face”: “they are not merely witnesses, least of all they are witnesses; they are actors and creators” (Budryte 2016: 9, citing Aleksievich 2004: 13). Aleksievich argued that it was time for women to write their own history about war, which would have “its own colors, its own smells, its own space and its own words”, choosing their own language and using their own feelings (Budryte 2016: 8, citing Aleksievich 2004: 8). This is how art can supplement the omissions of gender-blind history and expand the ‘reservoir of identity’ (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995) for the coming generations of women to draw upon.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Research Question

The point of departure for this research project was an interest in taking stock of the effects of mass emigration on the cultural production of post-conflict societies. I began by asking: what happened to Bosnia's cultural production as the nation underwent layers of traumatogenic transformations – war, system change, and mass emigration? The scope of the research allowed for only a partial pursuit of the answer, a snapshot from Vienna as one of the largest hubs of BiH emigration. While previous research on the role of art in rebuilding post-conflict cultural identities takes the nation as the unit of analysis, this case study expands the viewpoint by asking the question from a transnational gendered perspective:

How do transnational female artists approach the (re)construction of cultural memory and identity in post-conflict societies?

This question will be explored through the work and biographies of first-generation female artists within the BiH transnational community in Vienna. As a first-generation Bosnian female architect living in Vienna for the past 15 years, I chose this topic as a long-standing personal fascination, but also for its political significance as a paradigmatic case of BiH diaspora. Due to its geographical proximity and historical ties, Vienna has been home to one of the largest BiH diasporic communities in the world and a cultural hub for BiH artists and intellectuals since the era of Austro-Hungarian imperialism (s. Chapter I: Context).

The research question evolved through several iterations, starting from a generalized inquiry into the extent to which the BiH artists in Vienna maintain ties with their homeland. The focus on female artists and the categories of memory and identity emerged from the literature review of post-war BiH art, which revealed an unexpected dominance of female voices both in the country and within the BiH diasporic communities worldwide.

The themes of identity and memory will be explored in the female migrant artists' work, transnational social networks, and institutional ties. The first set of subquestions looks at the artists' work and focuses on the themes of war and trauma as an axis of reference to the homeland. In post-conflict settings such as BiH, these topics are inevitably present in any discussion of identity and memory. However, 25 years after the conflict, it is important and necessary to look at the other side of this axis as well: how does the transnational cultural production address the collective identity beyond the themes of war? Savansukha (2015: 31) quotes Igor Sovilj, one of the artists involved in the protest over Bosnia's lack of representation at the 2007 Venice Art Biennale (s. Chapter I: Context), raising this issue:

“The last time Bosnia and Herzegovina, even if not really a national representation, was presented at Venice Biennial was when it still emanated the necessary freshness and attraction of a typical media spectacle. Many years after that our country, deprived from world attention, is still not able to construct some unique national identity that would not be measured by means of war aesthetics.” (Savansukha 2015: 31)

The study thus also looks at the aspects of BiH cultural heritage that female migrant artists deem representative and draw upon to articulate their own identity and differentiate themselves on the global stage. The analysis of their art is based on the information provided by the respondents in interviews, as well as critics’ texts published on their websites, and will mostly concern itself with recurring themes and messaging, rather than with questions of style.

The second set of sub-questions focuses on the artists’ transnational social fields, i.e. their individual identities and social relations (s. Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework), to reconstruct their relationships to their homeland and host society as well as to the diasporic community they are presumed to be a part of. What does it mean to be a ‘diasporic’/‘migrant’ artist in a society where they are seen as the representatives of one of the largest minorities? To what extent do they maintain social ties with artists in their homeland and diasporic community within the host society? How do they engage with audiences in their homeland and the art scene in their host society? Which factors foster and hinder their agency in the maintenance of these ties? The experiences of those artists who have engaged in cultural production in both contexts are essential to understand the hybrid identities and complex relationships at play: how do they position themselves in relation to different diasporic sites of belonging (‘Selbstverortung’)?

This research project is limited to the element of cultural production: it looks at female migrant artists’ everyday realities, their biographies, and how these are reflected in their art. All findings, therefore, reflect the artists’ point of view, rather than those of their audiences.

3.2. Methodology

The theoretical framework elaborated in the previous chapter positions this study within the interpretive paradigm, which sees reality (in this case identity, memory, and trauma) as socially constructed and comprised of people's subjective experiences of the external world (Taylor/Medina 2013). The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is "inter-subjective knowledge construction", whereby "interpretive knowledge of the other is produced through a prolonged process of interaction undertaken by ethnographers who immerse themselves within the culture they are studying" (Taylor/Medina 2013: 4). In the context of this research project, this immersion included four biographical narrative interviews ranging from two to four hours in length, continued contact with the interviewed artists throughout the research process, as well as participation in two events they organized in 2019.

Limited resources allowed for only a small number of participants, aiming to showcase the diversity of the BiH female diasporic thought, rather than to produce statistical generalizations about the larger community. Considering the small sample size and the sensitive and complex nature of the research question, qualitative methodology was best suited for the inquiry. Qualitative interviews provided the openness and ambiguity needed to discuss subjective understandings, feelings, opinions and beliefs (Matthews/Ross 2010: 142). With migrant women as the research subjects in mind, the study was designed around biographical research methods, informed by their application in transnationalism studies and the insights of feminist research methodology.

According to Siouti (2017: 179), the biographical approach provides "an excellent way of researching transnational migration experiences and processes, because it offers a methodological way to capture empirically the diversity, process and transformational character of migration phenomena and identity constructions in the age of globalization". Biographical narrative interviews incorporate migrants' life stories in multiple contexts, from the country of origin through multiple transnational sites to the country of current residence, thus "overcoming the trap posed by methodological nationalism" (Siouti 2017: 179). Since all interviewed artists migrated multiple times and maintained connections to several transnational sites, biographical narrative interviews proved to be valuable in producing rich material for the construction of BiH transnational space through the artists' biographies (Siouti 2017), rather than only offering answers to preconceived questions. Biographical methods also offered "theoretical and methodological access to the embeddedness of the life stories of individual migrants into the micro-, meso-, and macrostructures of migration" (Apitzsch/Siouti 2007: 6), which was particularly significant in connecting the individual female migrant artists' experiences within

the broader context of mass emigration of the BiH intelligentsia since the war (further discussed in the sections on data collection and analysis).

My research methodology and the practice of biographical methods in this study were profoundly influenced by the feminist critique of traditional research methodology and epistemology. Feminist research methodology highlights the biases and distortions in the study of women by exposing the power asymmetries inherent in knowledge production (Margaret Fonow/Cook 1991). One of the central arguments of feminist theory is that knowledge, reason, and science have been “*man-made*”: the patriarchal Western societies have throughout history produced art, media, literature, and (social) science which represent male interests and exhibit predominantly male characteristics (Letherby 2003: 20). These insights informed my choices of research subjects and literature references as a contribution to the increasing efforts of feminist scholarship to counter and correct these historical exclusions, by amplifying female voices and experiences through social research.

Feminist critique challenges the positivist notions of objectivity in social science by highlighting the gender imbalance in the production of knowledge. Instead, it asserts that knowledge is never independent of its producers and embraces the inevitability of bias. Feminist research methodology emphasizes the importance of recognizing the researcher’s positionality and subjectivity (Jenkins et al. 2019: 424) and reflecting the power inherent in the researcher-researched relationship. Even if the researcher and the researched belong to the same gender, class, and race, as is the case in my study, the researcher is still in the position of power because she has more control over the research process and product. My relationship with the interviewed artists will be discussed in more detail in the following section on data collection. Feminist theory exposes how male domination in all areas of cultural and knowledge production has led to a hierarchization of knowledge; how the knowledge of the male-dominated academy (authorized knowledge) came to dominate the knowledge drawn from everyday experience, considered to be the female domain (Letherby 2003: 20). Feminism validates personal experience as a source of knowledge and calls for special attention to be given to the affective aspects of research. This position is also related to the critique of positivist notions of rationality and objectivity as devoid of emotion. It represents an attempt to resist historical “male-defined ways of knowing”, which “deny the importance of the experiential, the private and the personal” (Letherby 2003: 42), and to “rescue emotion from its discarded role in the creation of knowledge” (Margaret Fonow/Cook 1991: 11). The following section will discuss how these feminist values informed the data collection and analysis methods used in the study.

3.3. Data Collection

The epistemological value that feminist research assigns to personal experience and its emotional aspects informed my choice of biographical narrative interviews as the method of data collection. Unlike other types of interviews, in which the respondent answers a set of questions preconceived and structured by the interviewer, the biographical narrative interview allows the interviewee to engage into spontaneous narration of her life experiences guided by her own “structures of relevance” (Apitzsch and Siouti 2007: 9). The form of the biographical narrative interview imitates everyday communication and puts the interviewee in charge of its course, minimizing the influence of the researcher and maximizing the authenticity of the collected data (Schütze 1984: 285).

In an ideal model of the biographical narrative interview, the interviewer waits until the narrator breaks off the story on their own accord, only encouraging narration through “non-verbal cues” (Schütze 1984: 285). Once the narration comes to a natural stopping point, in the second part of the interview or a second session, the interviewer follows up with questions on topics mentioned during the narration or on other issues of interest to the research. In the third part, the interviewer guides the interviewee towards a “more abstracted assessment of the circumstances and motivations for their actions”, approaching them as an “expert and theorist of their own experience” (ibid.). In practice, however, it was not always possible (nor desirable) to adhere to Schütze’s strict guidelines. For the sake of emulating everyday conversation and encouraging narration, my involvement in biographical interviews was thus not limited to ‘non-verbal cues’. The interviews would often inevitably turn into a conversation and return to the narration at the interviewee’s discretion. After the initial narration and follow-up questions, the respondents were asked about more abstract concepts such as the BiH cultural identity, feelings of belonging as an artist and a citizen, motivations for becoming an artist, and messages they are trying to communicate through their work.

My interpretation of Schütze’s biographical narrative interviewing method was influenced by Ann Oakley’s (1981) feminist critique of traditional (male) interviewing practices. In her seminal paper “Interviewing women, a contradiction in terms” (1981), published around the same time as Schütze’s biographical analysis methods, Oakley criticized traditional research textbooks for prescribing an unengaged and impersonal interviewer-interviewee relationship as the standard of an interview’s scientific legitimacy. The interviewer was advised to remain as distant as possible, conducting the interview as a “one way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not give information” (Oakley 1981: 30). Interviewees were hereby allocated a “narrow and objectified function as data” (Ibid).

Oakley shares her experiences in interviewing first-time mothers immediately before and after birth to expose the methodological challenges of applying the male standards of detachment and ‘professionalism’ when entering people’s private spheres. She argues that the quality of the collected data is best when the interviewer-interviewee relationship is non-hierarchical, and the interviewer is prepared to invest their own personal identity in the relationship (Oakley 1981: 41). Following Oakley’s recommendations, the following section will briefly elaborate on my relationship with the interviewed artists, discussing the often omitted qualitative information about the interviewing process such as “the interviewees feelings about being interviewed and about the interviewer and vice versa, quality of the interviewer - interviewee relationship, the hospitality shown to the interviewers by the interviewees and the broader reach of the interview encounters into other forms of social relationships” (Oakley 1981: 31).

Between May and September of 2019, I conducted four interviews, lasting between two and four hours. The initial plan of interviewing 10 artists was reduced to 5 after it became clear that the interviews would last significantly longer than the foreseen 30 minutes, providing an abundance of material for analysis. The fifth interview was scheduled and rescheduled multiple times, but never took place due to the artist’s busy schedule (she was opening an exhibition at the Austrian Association of Visual Artists and became a mother during this time). Despite not being able to conduct the interview, I kept in touch with her and visited two events within her exhibition, which provided significant context for the analysis. Scheduling interviews proved to be more difficult than initially expected since I had no previous contact with any of the artists. Their only incentive to invest their time was interest in my research topic and the promise of being featured in a book about BiH female artists in Vienna if it was ever to materialize.

The interview transcripts were not translated in their entirety and are thus not attached to this paper. Interview excerpts in Chapter 4 will be referenced by the number of the interview and the date according to the below overview, for example: (I1: 30.05.2019). Since the discussion of the artists’ work was an integral part of the interviews, anonymization in the subsequent analysis was not feasible. The permission to use their names and images was obtained in the interviews.

	Artist	Date	Duration	Reference
I1	Sanja Lasić	30.05.2019	ca. 4 h	I1: 30.05.2019
I2	Lana Čmajčanin	07.06.2019	ca. 3.5 h	I2: 07.06.2019
I3	Nataša Mirković	16.07.2019	ca. 2 h	I3: 16.07.2019
I4	Anita Zečić	04.09.2019	ca. 3 h	I4: 04.09.2019

All but the first interview were conducted in cafes and were recorded using a smartphone. The first interview was conducted in the artists' home, which showcased in later comparison the importance of the setting for the quality of the interview. The hospitality shown to me by the first participant instantly created a bond based on a culturally similar upbringing. Her willingness to let me into her private sphere as a complete stranger increased my acute awareness of the responsibility I have as a feminist researcher not to betray the trust of my respondents. The first interview, likely in part due to its setting, was the longest and the most intimate one, leading to an ongoing relationship which included attending the artists' performances and socializing outside of the research project.

All interviewed artists have had previous experience of being interviewed for social research and some were themselves researchers (in musical ethnology and postcolonial art). This made the process not only easier, but also more dynamic and inspiring, since they intuitively understood research and were willing to engage in discussion on the topics of interest at a high level, offering insights that often generated new perspectives for my work. Two of the four interviewed artists have reported back that the interviews helped them articulate ideas they were previously struggling to express in their work as well.

The study was met with enthusiasm across the board, even from artists who did not find the time to participate in an interview or those who did not feel at ease with being deemed 'Bosnian artists' (s. Chapter 4). The literature review conducted prior to the interviewing phase had prepared me for the problematic aspects of ethnic and migrant designations of cultural producers. The initial e-mail sent to the artists thus emphasized that the project's intent was not to pigeonhole the artists into their origin stories, but rather to approach the issues of identity, belonging, and relationship to the country of origin as open questions. The idea of representing BiH women as artists was in itself seen as emancipatory, in particular, considering that research and media representation on BiH migrants (and particularly women) is often limited to the stories of guest workers existing in ethnic isolation on the margins of Viennese society ("This is how you knock down prejudice!" – I2: 07.06.2019).

The artists' support for the intent of the project greatly helped build rapport. The solidarity of our position as female migrants of a similar age was enhanced by the one-off nature of our encounter. It created not only a non-hierarchical, but a warm and connected atmosphere, which allowed for things to be discussed and shared that perhaps would not come up in conversations within continuous relationships. My challenge as a researcher was to remain focused on the topics of interest, particularly when emotionally difficult topics such as the war-related trauma would come up in conversation. In a similar vein, I initially struggled with the (perhaps imagined) discomfort around my ethnic background and that of my respondents. Even though we were all

children during the war, I grew up on one side of the divide (Republic of Srpska) and they on the other (Federation BiH). Since the research questions of identity and memory inevitably touched upon the Bosnian war, I was initially concerned that they would hesitate to share their positions on these sensitive issues, associating my name and origin with the population which has so far largely denied the war atrocities that were a part of their personal experience. In line with feminist interviewing practices, this particular challenge was overcome by openly sharing my views on the matter and “investing my personal identity into the relationship” (Oakley 1981). Making my critical views of the ethnonationalist discourses in BiH known from the start allowed the respondents to openly talk about their experiences of the war, their ethnically diverse families, as well as their negative experiences with the members of my ethnic group (“I am afraid of the Serbs” – I1: 30.05.2019).

Siouti (2017: 184) points out the additional methodological challenges specific to biographical interviewing of transnational migrants and language. The methods of biographical interviewing were developed in a monolingual research context, leaving it up to individual researchers to “reflect and deal productively with multilingualism, code switching and translation” (Siouti 2017: 184). All four interviews in this study were conducted in Bosnian and analyzed in their original form. The results of the biographical analysis were then translated into English. An interesting aspect of the interviews in this study was the hybridization of the language, common in conversations among bilingual and multilingual transnationals. The interviewees would often express abstract theoretical concepts in English or other languages they were fluent in (Slovenian, Italian), switching to German when using legal, administrative or philosophical terms. This shared hybridity fostered bonding in every interview. In direct quotes from interviews, the words originally spoken in English are italicized; those in German and other languages are left in their original form and translated in brackets (Chapter 4).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study follows the biographical analysis method developed by Fritz Schütze (1983, 1984), supplemented with Saldana’s (2008, 2014) approach to qualitative analysis through coding. Schütze’s method (re)constructs biographies to “understand how individuals partake in social contexts and make sense of them” (Gültekin et al. 2003: 1), highlighting the “social processes of action and suffering” and “possible resources for coping and change” (Siouti 2017: 185). Generalization based on a detailed analysis of individual cases is at the core of this approach, making it particularly well suited for the data collected in this study (few, but extensive individual interviews). Looking at the artists’ biographical narrative interviews through Schütze’s lens unlocked new layers of meaning in the data, contextualizing

their experiences within a larger social context of (female) war trauma, and the (post-)war mass emigration of BiH intelligentsia. It also enabled me to establish links and intersections between their individual artistic practices as forms of action, coping, and transformation. Later phases of the biographical analysis were supplemented with coding to extract important themes from the parts of interviews that did not strictly adhere to biographical narration.

The essence of Schütze's (1983) biographical analysis method are the four 'cognitive figure' which he identified as naturally occurring in impromptu biographical narration:

1. biography and event holders (important actors carrying the events),
2. frames of events (correspond to actions and experiences, so-called 'process structures'),
3. social structures (situations, life milieus and social worlds), and
4. entire shape of life history.

My analysis focused on the second cognitive figure, process structures, aiming to understand the problems and conflicts the female migrant artists' experience, how they shape their agency and what this reveals about the larger transformative processes of BiH cultural production.

Within the second cognitive figure, Schütze (1984, as cited by Siuoti 2017: 184) identifies four fundamental types of 'process structures', corresponding to actions and experiences typically featured in biographical accounts:

- (a) *actions* - process structures in which the narrator plans, takes initiative and acts in accordance with his biographical goals;
- (b) *institutions* - phases of life in which institutional expectations are in the foreground (the narrator hands over the control to an institutional context - in the artists' biographies the dominant institutions are educational, such as art high schools and universities);
- (c) *trajectories* - process structures which indicate a potential loss of control over the life because of extraneous conditions; and
- (d) *transformations* - process structures which suggest an unexpected or unaccountable turn towards a creative transformation in the biography.

All of the above described process structures serve as hermeneutic tools to understand the actor's agency and, more importantly, to contextualize it within larger social conditions. In the context of post-conflict transnational female artists' biographies, the concept of trajectories is particularly interesting. While institutional process structures "mobilize order in life" (schools, for example, introduce a clear course of action and a schedule of achievements for students), trajectories "disturb or even destroy existing structures of social order in biographies" (Riemann/Schütze 1991: 339). The experience of war in the artists' biographies thus represents a momentous trajectory, but the categorization of their migration processes is not so clear-cut.

As Apitzsch and Siouti (2007: 12-13) point out, migration is simultaneously structured both by action schemes and by collective trajectories:

“On the one hand, migration seems to be social action ‘par excellence’. A person or rather a couple or a whole family who want to emigrate have to plan and organise and to make decisions with lasting consequences. Thus, migration seems to be bound to the principle of a biographical action scheme. On the other hand, the reasons for migration mostly refer to collective fate: poverty, unemployment, political instability or even persecution of parts of a population. As a collective fate, migration seems to be quite the opposite of social action and rational choice; paradoxically, its sequences are structured more like the laws of nature than according to social planning”.

The construction of biography in the context of migration and transnationalism thus meant negotiating the artists’ intentional individual action and the collective condition of social disorder and suffering (Apitzsch/Siouti 2007: 12-13) in the post-war, post-socialist BiH.

Following Schütze’s approach, data analysis unfolded in four steps. First, the transcribed interviews were roughly segmented into narrative, argumentative, and descriptive parts. Narrative segments correspond to memories; they are usually narrated in the past tense and are considered in biographical research to be the closest to the narrator’s authentic experiences (Haiser 2017). In comparison, argumentative segments provide insight into how the narrator evaluates and rationalizes her experiences and actions from a relatively detached point of view in the present (ibid.). In the second step, the narrative segments were analyzed and assigned process structures, followed by a reconstruction of the interviewee’s life story and its dominant process structures. In the third step, the argumentative and descriptive segments, including those parts of interviews that departed from biographical narration, were analyzed using qualitative coding methods. Finally, the single case analyses were compared and contrasted to generate a theoretical model (Siouti 2017: 179).

The following chapter will elaborate on the findings of the interview analysis and discuss the process structures across the four biographical interviews. First, the artists’ trajectories of war, migration, and identity will be contextualized within the post-war BiH transnational space. Next, I will elaborate on the institutional phases of their lives, providing background for the understanding of their artistic identities and the purpose of their work. Finally, the process structures of actions and transformations will reveal how the artists’ agency is expressed through their ties to the art scene, cultural institutions, and audiences in BiH and how it is materialized into objects of cultural memory in their work.

4. YU GO GIRL: Female cultural production within the BiH community in Vienna

4.1. Mapping the Field

My interest in researching diasporic cultural production in Vienna developed slowly over 15 years of living at the intersection of the city's tight-knit architectural scene and its large Ex-Yugoslav (YU) community. The sample for the initially envisioned study was therefore much broader, since none of the artists in my social network were Bosnian (most were from Serbia and Croatia) and all but one were men. In line with the stereotypes about the 'Yugo' community in Vienna, left over from the 1960s to 1980s guest worker era, the feedback in conversations with migration researchers was to either change the topic or to narrow it down to musicians, since this is likely the "only" type of cultural (re)production taking place within this community. I was constantly met with the question: are there any Ex-YU artists living in Vienna? And if yes, are there enough for a (small qualitative) study? Considering Vienna's historical status as the cultural capital of Europe, the capital of an empire within which the people of BiH were second-class citizens, as well as the size of the BiH diasporic community in Vienna today (over 100,000 people), this seemingly naive question became loaded with prejudice and ascriptions of cultural inferiority.

A few days into the desk research phase, it became clear that these assumptions were unfounded. Indeed, narrowing the sample down to BiH and further to female artists and first-generation migrants was not only possible, but necessary. These boundaries are not reflected on the ground in the diasporic art scene in Vienna, as neither the host society, nor the diasporic community, differentiates between individual post-Yugoslav states when it comes to cultural production. The shared language, historical and cultural references – rather than passports – define the audience attending diasporic cultural events, both in the case of guest events showcasing artists from post-YU states and those involving the artists living and working within the diasporic community in Vienna. Nevertheless, BiH first-generation migrant artists, unlike those born and raised in Vienna from BiH parents or those from other post-YU republics, inhabit a significantly different condition in terms of the relationship to their homeland. Conflicts of memory and identity are unique to BiH among the post-YU republics, as the least ethnically homogenous nation and one in which all formerly conflicting parties are presently constitutive peoples, rather than minorities. A conversation about identity and memory with an artist from another post-YU state would, therefore, be very different.

The initial desk research phase intended to map the field of BiH artists in Vienna and provide an overview of the themes of their work. This involved searching through Austrian media reports, alumni catalogues of art academies, websites of diasporic cultural organizations and

programs of events showcasing migrant art. I contacted four art academies in Vienna, but due to the EU-wide data protection laws, none of them were able to provide any information on their alumni. The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna still had an open access alumni catalogue on their website, which proved to be an essential source of information. One of the surprising outcomes of the desk research was the domination of female voices within the diasporic cultural production, which further narrowed the sample to female artists.

A total of 10 female artists were approached for an interview via e-mail. The initial sample aimed to showcase the diversity of the BiH female cultural production in Vienna: the selection included film directors, Nina Kusturica and Selma Doborac; musicians, Nataša Mirković and Ljubinka Jokić, theatre designer Amra Bergman; performance artists, Sanja Lasić and Nataša Mackuljak; visual artists, Lana Čmajčanin and Anita Zečić, and writer and literature translator, Maša Dabić. This sample also reflected a different kind of diversity, namely the different trajectories that led them to Vienna: some were child refugees, others adults who already had established art careers in former Yugoslavia, yet others were young academics who emigrated after the war.

Based on availability, the final selection of interviewed artists included Lana Čmajčanin, Sanja Lasić, Nataša Mackuljak, Nataša Mirković, and Anita Zečić. The interview with Nataša Mackuljak was rescheduled several times and unfortunately never took place, as she was in the process of opening an exhibition at the VBKÖ (Austrian Association of Visual Artists) and became a mother at the time. However, I attended two events she organized as a part of the research, one of which coincidentally also included a performance by Sanja Lasić. Mackuljak's work will, therefore, be discussed as well, as an important link between the other interviewed artists, both thematically and in terms of social networks. The following section "Meet the Artists" will provide a brief overview of the artists' profiles, as they present themselves via their websites and publications.

4.2. Meet the Artists

Lana Čmajčanin (b. 1983, Sarajevo, BiH) is an installation, video, and performance artist living and working between Sarajevo and Vienna since 2016. She holds an MA from the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Sarajevo and is currently a PhD candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Her socially engaged artistic practice frequently references the war and post-war situation in Bosnia and



Figure 3: Lana Čmajčanin, “Blank Maps” (2016-2018).
Source: lanacmajcanin.com

Herzegovina, political frameworks, the role of women, and the female body (RuyaMaps 2019). Lana is “not afraid to engage even the most traumatic issues of the space she comes from. Her work presents an un-bribeable political agenda and succeeds in translating and transmitting local realities and experiences in a universal code that is comprehensible to an international audience” (MQW 2016). Her work has been exhibited in several solo and group exhibitions across the post-Yugoslav space and Europe, and further in China, Canada, Columbia, Turkey, the United States, and at the Venice Biennale. She is a co-founder of the feminist Association of Culture and Art CRVENA in Sarajevo. The projects presented here, “Blank Maps”, “Trauma of the Crime”, and “Balkan Cruelty” were selected from Lana’s prolific body of work as representative of her post-colonial feminist message in connection to BiH.

“Blank Maps” (2016 - 2018) is a projection of 56 historical maps of Bosnia and Herzegovina drawn by European, Arabic, Russian, and other authors, from the Roman empire until the 1995 Dayton Agreement. The maps are overlaid into an illuminated palimpsest of borders, resulting in a “black hole of information” (I2: 07.06.2019). Faced with this complex representation of Bosnia’s “over-saturation with history”, the audience is presented with the questions: “how can we interpret this exhausted geography, how can we organize it in our minds and grasp it?” (Ibid..) The artist explains her intent behind “Blank Maps”:

“The message of ‘Blank Maps’ is twofold. Firstly, the project aims to show that in the case of BiH, the claim to space is ephemeral. BiH borders have changed so many times throughout history - any attempt of clinging to a specific period in history and mythologizing it is futile. Secondly, it is a critique of the colonial powers: we were never involved in the drawing of the borders of our own state, especially women never had a place at that table, no political self-determination. The classroom is also an important

concept in my work, because the teachers are usually women. They are thus only given the space to transfer the knowledge, never to produce it, they are merely another tool of indoctrination.” (I2: 07.06.2019).

“Blank Maps” thus offers a rare post-colonial and feminist critique of Bosnia’s turbulent history, it provides a new framework to understand current memory and identity battles in BiH. Lana challenges the positivist understanding of both cartography and education, as “places purified from subjectivism, ideologies and any conceptions beyond verifiable facts” (Gović 2014). The use of blank maps references traditional geography curriculums in schools, where students are given empty maps with outlined country borders to fill in, demonstrating the knowledge imparted on them by the teacher. The maps are projected using another didactic tool, an overhead slide projector, encouraging the visitor to interactively choose and pair slides at their own discretion. The artist thus employs the audience to contemplate the power asymmetries inherent in cartography, as the realm of representation and construction of reality, as well as the education that reproduces it. Interactivity is a recurring strategy in Lana’s work, aiming to “permeate the membrane between the artist and the audience” (I2: 07.06.2019) and put the audience in the role of the decision-maker. She reported in the interview that the audience at the Venice Biennale had engaged so much with “Blank Maps” that they destroyed the installation - she was in the process of reconstructing it for the next exhibition at the time.

The project “Trauma of the Crime” consists of several interventions designed to engage the audience in an unsettling act of witnessing. Numbers, faces, and testimonies of systemic rape in the Bosnian war are presented to the viewer in seemingly misplaced settings. In “Female president”, we see the artist standing behind a pulpit seemingly giving a political speech, mimicking the oratory style of dictators. Instead, we hear the shocking testimony of a young woman raped and tortured during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This contrast between the different sensory experiences heightens the emotional response, taking the viewer out of their position of detachment into a mix of anger, sadness, empathy, and even shame (lanacmajcanin.com). Similarly, in “20,000 - Trauma of a Crime”, 20 music stands are arranged on a stage in what seems like an elegant setting awaiting an orchestra performance. However, instead of musical notes, the sheets on the stands are filled with equally spaced numbers from 1 to 20,000: each number symbolizing the estimated number of women raped in the Bosnian war (the exact numbers were never established). In a patriarchal society which denies the atrocities against women and shames them into silence, raising her voice on behalf of the survivors becomes an important act of resistance. The artistic frame gives that voice the “special power to affect and alter the way we see ourselves and others in our everyday lives” (Turino 2004: 10).

Lana's most recent project "Balkan Cruelty" (2019) combines post-colonial critique of homeland - host land relations with the recurring theme of wartime exploitation of female body. The project is based on the graphic pamphlet "Balkangreuel", produced by Gottfried Sieben in 1909, following the annexation of BiH by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The pamphlet served as pornographic wartime



Figure 4: Lana Čmajčanin, "Balkan Cruelty" (2019).
Source: lanacmajcanin.com

propaganda, "portraying the enemy as a Balkans savage, while a woman's body stereotypically assumed the role of territory subject to usurpation and conquest" (lanacmajcanin.com). Similarly to "Trauma of the Crime", this project plays with perception to lure the audience out of their comfort zone. Twelve images from "Balkangreuel" are paired with twelve endemic flowers from 19th century Balkans to form a beautiful wallpaper in the decorative *Toile de Jouy* style, characteristic of luxurious Viennese interiors of the time (ibid.). At first glance, the wall installation seems to convey a pastoral scene, but closer inspection reveals gruesome portrayals of Balkans soldiers assaulting women. The contrast highlights how the demonized caricature of the Balkans simultaneously served the purpose of emphasizing "one's own exceptionality and alleged civility" (ibid.). "Balkan Cruelty" raises universal questions about the role of art in the construction of the Other and the power inherent in the production of cultural memory. In the specific context of the BiH - Austrian relationship, it establishes historical continuities in the exoticization of the Balkans with profound implications for the positioning of the BiH minority in Austria today.

Sanja Lasić (b. 1987, Sarajevo, BiH) is a visual and performance artist living and working in Vienna since 2011. She has an MA in Art and New Media from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and an MA and BA in Visual Arts and Curatorial Studies from NABA, Milan. Her work combines video and performance art with experimental music to create highly intimate interventions on the topics of identity, belonging, memory, and trauma. She has exhibited and performed in Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Russia, and the UK. Her current project "Sevdah of Lost Identity" was presented at the exhibition "A/Rhythm Heartbeat Detector", organized by Nataša Mackuljak and others at the VBKÖ in Vienna in 2019.

"Sevdah of Lost Identity" explores the themes of migration, identity, and be-longing, through a feminist deconstruction of the traditional Bosnian song. In collaboration with musicians, Eric Arno (USA) and Gustavo Petek (ARG), Sanja selects well-known Sevdah songs

and adapts them to reflect the contemporary Bosnian losses and longings. Their reinterpretation endows the traditionally melancholic music with new agency and resistance. In the traditional lyrics of longing for lost love, she unveils new meanings: a longing for a lost self, a lost home, a lost sense of belonging.

Inspired by the research of Damir Imamović (BiH) on Sevdah, Sanja highlights the hidden feminist and queer

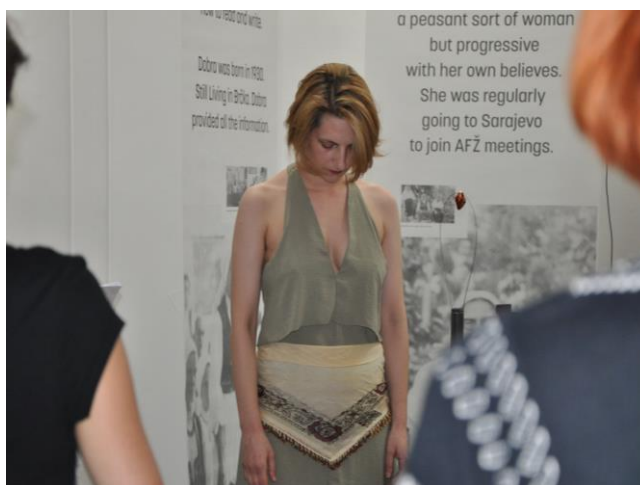


Figure 5: Sanja Lasić, “Sevdah of Lost Identity”, Vienna 2019. Source: Sanja Lasić.

messages in the lyrics. The traditional demeanor of the female Sevdah singer, the feminine and sensual diva, apolitical and preoccupied with love, is liberated to express unsettling feelings of anger and aggression, her voice powerful and at times threatening. The traditional is thus re-politicized, it no longer speaks only of the private but of the collective loss, loss of control and self-determination, of a shared fate of disruption. The audience is invited to witness a political act of self-discovery and left with the questions: Who am I? Who are we?

Sanja’s interpretation of Sevdah is the artistic expression of her biographical work. Through Sevdah, she confronts her individual trauma of dislocation and displacement as a child refugee of the Bosnian war, as well as the intergenerational trauma of her parents and grandparents. Three generations of her family suffered forced displacement, othering, and non-belonging between BiH and Slovenia. By singing Sevdah with a Slovenian accent, she is giving a voice to the exiled and forgotten children of the BiH war, written off and stripped of their belonging to the BiH community along the way.

Nataša Mackuljak (b. Brcko, BiH) is a performer, multimedia artist, social worker and activist living and working in Vienna since 2010. She studied Multimedia Science and Technology at the University of Social Sciences in Udine, Italy and Post-concept Art Practice at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. During the 1990s she was involved in feminist anti-war initiatives in Yugoslavia, Women in Black in Belgrade and Danube Peace Group in Vukovar (Croatia). She is currently pursuing a PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She also organizes and curates the activist art festival, Wien Woche. Nataša’s art addresses migration, precariat, and gender.

Her most recent project reconstructs the history of the Yugoslav feminist thought, addressing the disruption in cultural memory brought on by the war and post-war patriarchal discourses. Building on the archival work of the Association for Art and Culture (CRVENA)

Sarajevo, co-founded by Lana Čmajčanin, Nataša juxtaposes the forgotten history of the anti-fascist women's movement in WWII Yugoslavia (Antifašistički front žena - AFŽ) against Austria's dark history of this era and its current political and gender discourses (Seidl 2019).

In the 2019 exhibition titled "A / Rhythm Heartbeat Detector" at the VBKÖ, Nataša Mackuljak (BiH), Ivana and Marija Marjanović (SRB), Vinko Nino Jäger (AUT), and Em Schwarzwald (AUT) address the history of their ancestors and the need for female representation. Nataša's series of installations and performances tell the story of the BiH female movement, from the strategic operations of female partisans during World War II and the massive post-war organizing efforts of the AFŽ, to the historic 1978 conference of Yugoslav feminists titled "Comrade Woman: The Woman's Question. A New Approach?" in Belgrade.

The exhibition also features a large-scale comic produced by sisters, Ivana and Marija Marjanović, representing scenes from the life of their great-grandmother Olga, who was active in the underground anti-fascist women's movement against the Nazi regime in World War II Serbia. In a style usually reserved for male superheroes, the comic shows Olga and her girlfriends plotting strategies of aiding the resistance, while dealing with domestic violence in a patriarchal society. In parallel, Vinko Nino Jäger negotiates Austria's history through the story of the former female president of the VBKÖ, Stephan*ie Hollenstein, who was in a lesbian relationship while working for the NS. His installation conjures up the ghosts of the past, posing the question "How would you decide today?" (Seidl 2019). Although Nataša Mackuljak was not interviewed due to organizational challenges, her work represents a significant link in terms of themes and transnational (female) social networks between the other interviewed artists.

Nataša Mirković (b. 1972, Zenica, BiH) is a singer, actress, and musical ethnologist living and working in Vienna since 2004 (in Austria since 1994). She studied musicology in Sarajevo, followed by classical voice, Lied and Oratorio in Graz. She has performed at the Graz Opera, Schauspielhaus Graz and Volksoper in Vienna, as well as at countless international festivals and chamber music events.

Guided by her passion for musical ethnology, Nataša combines her varied interests, ranging from classical song to Baroque music and traditional folk music, into contemporary reinterpretations of classical and traditional music, often crossing over into experimental theatre and performance art. I interviewed her on



Figure 6: Nataša Mirković. Source: natasa-mirkovic.com

the eve of her performance “Jazz, Monteverdi et Parfum” at the Festival des Abbayes Lorraine, which combined 17th-century Italian composers with jazz in a musical improvisation accompanied by live perfume making. The cross-cutting nature of this project embodies her ethos as an artist:

“My heart is in musical ethnology and I have many strange interests, so my work is never mainstream. I am something between a scientist and a musician. I am interested in the musical movement, the form of music, how music evolves. For example, music from the 17th century, when you take it out of the museum, what does it sound like today on stage? What can be done to refresh it, to let in some air, to open the window so to speak. This is certainly a matter of improvisation, how we bring it to life in the 21st century, now more liberated but still with its own musical identity.” (I3: 16.07.2019)

Starting from the traditional music of her Balkan roots as the basis, Nataša takes the BiH musical heritage onto the world stage and hybridizes it across time, space, and musical genre. She has rearranged Balkans and Austrian traditional music in collaboration with the Austrian hurdy-gurdy virtuoso Matthias Loibner to wide critical acclaim (“Ajvar & Sterz” 2005, “Winterreise” 2010). In 2011 she reinterpreted Yugoslav pop- and rock hits for voice and double bass with Nenad Vasić (BiH) on “Soul Train”, providing a new perspective on the musical heritage of Yugoslavia. Her latest project “En El Amor” is a rediscovery of the all but forgotten musical tradition of the BiH Sephardic Jews, rearranged for serpent and oriental percussion with Michel Godard (FR) and Jarrod Cagwin (US). Nataša’s current work focuses on experimental projects in collaboration with international artists, as well as teaching her signature singing method “Universal Voice Leading” across Europe.

Anita Zečić (b. 1987, Prijedor, BiH) is a visual and conceptual artist and activist living and working in Vienna since 2005. She studied Painting and Process-oriented Art at the Wiener Kunsthochschule (Viennese Art School) and Art Pedagogy at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Anita’s politically engaged work is unapologetically consumed with Bosnia, the country’s cultural heritage, collective identity and memory. Her most widely exhibited works are her two graduation projects, “Portrait of a Country” from Wiener Kunsthochschule and “Prijedor ‘92” from the Academy of Applied Arts.

“Portrait of a Country” is a series of ink and graphite drawings of seven “quintessentially Bosnian” towns: Sarajevo, Mostar, Počitelj, Višegrad, Bihać, Tuzla, and Jajce. The large-scale painstakingly detailed drawings are a love letter to Bosnia’s cultural heritage, showcasing the diversity of influences accumulated in this space throughout its turbulent history. For Anita, therein lies the beauty and uniqueness of her homeland (I4: 04.09.2019):

“When you walk down the street in Sarajevo, from the Baščaršija and its Ottoman architecture, through the Austrian part, on to communist Yugoslavia, you go through three

great ‘kingdoms’ that transpired in this space. And how beautiful Sarajevo is for that! Sad is the nation that doesn’t know its worth, doesn’t appreciate all that it has left behind”.

The project set out to elevate Bosnia’s image from the war carnage it has become known for in international circles, but also to remind Bosnians in the country and the diaspora alike of beauty and value of their cultural heritage.

Anita’s latest project, “Prijedor ‘92”, is an ongoing nomadic installation commemorating the civilian victims of the war in her hometown of Prijedor. The installation is conceptualized as an inflatable hemisphere made of white translucent textile measuring three meters in radius. The dome geometry was chosen as a common typology in sacral architecture of the three BiH constitutive religions and former parties to the conflict: Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam. It consists of 3,176 elements sewn together, symbolizing the official number of civilian casualties in the Municipality of Prijedor.

The dome can be entered through two narrow openings opposite each other. Upon entering the visitor is faced with photographs of people who perished in Prijedor’s concentration camps, suspended from the ceiling at eye level. An audio recording repeats the names of the victims, combined with the testimonies of survivors, from the accounts of journalist, Ed Vulliamy, who brought the existence of the camps to international attention in 1992, and followed by a statement of apology from the perpetrators convicted at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The space is designed to invoke a heightened emotional state of claustrophobia and entrapment. The translucent white fabric of the pavilion allows the visitor to see the silhouettes of the people on the outside, but not to discern their identity or their actions, enhancing the feeling of being watched. The artist emphasizes the humanist message of her memorial, countering the ethnic victimization discourses dominant in post-war BiH (I4: 04.09.2019):

“Every ethnic group in BiH is making their own monuments. That is why I wanted to make a monument for all civilian victims of the Municipality of Prijedor, regardless of their ethnicity. This was very important to me [...] and this is the point of remembering Prijedor, because these were three thousand civilian victims, not soldiers, and what happened there was done by neighbors and people who grew up together, inside one community. Nationalism didn’t bring us anything in 1992 and it won’t bring us anything in 2019”.



Figure 7: Anita Zečić, “Prijedor ‘92.” (2017).
Source: anitazecic.com

“Prijeđor ‘92” has so far been exhibited in BiH, Croatia, Austria, Switzerland, International Criminal Court in The Hague, and the United States, but not in the town of Prijeđor itself, where the Republic of Srpska authorities denied the necessary permits.

Anita is a volunteer and an activist for transitional justice and the recognition and commemoration of crimes against humanity. Using her international platform, she tells the stories of the forgotten small town communities she grew up in, addressing the trauma of her relatives and neighbors and thus “disaggregating monumental trauma” into individual faces and complex experiences” (Budryte 2016, s. Theoretical Framework). Like Lana Čmajčanin, Anita is a voice of resistance against the selective amnesia of the post-war BiH society. She intersects art with activism to counter denialist discourses promoted at the highest levels of political power in BiH, but also engages young generations in dialogue about the past, the present, and the future of the region.

Consistent with the literature on diasporic cultural production, this brief overview of the interviewed artists’ work illustrates how they draw upon the various sites in which their transnational biographies unfold to create hybrid artistic expressions (Turino 2004:14). This hybridity is particularly salient in music, where new interpretations of traditional Bosnian song serve to bridge the cultural gap between the homeland and host societies. Visual and conceptual artists take a decidedly more activist stance: a feminist and post-colonial critique of collective memory and trauma is central to their work. They use their international platform to counter the ethnonationalist selective amnesia in BiH, confronting the audience with the suffering of others and creating new space for a more courageous empathy. In the host society and internationally, their work addresses a different kind of amnesia, stemming from the detachment from the Balkans trauma as the experience of the uncivilized Other (Mijić 2019).

Although these themes distinguish BiH female art from other diasporic cultural expressions, we cannot speak of a coherent Bosnian art *scene* in Vienna. The artists’ reluctance to engage in the construction of BiH diasporic culture, as well as their ambivalence in terms of belonging in Austria, is rooted in the identity-related tension in their host society. In light of the multiple “symbolic boundaries” at play - both between the Austrian majority and the BiH minority, and within the BiH diasporic community itself (Mijić 2019, s. Chapter 1) - the artists construe their residence in Vienna as somewhat unintentional and impermanent, a product of circumstance rather than a conscious choice.

The following section will reconstruct the interviewed artists’ biographies and contextualize their experiences of migration and trauma within the collective fate of Bosnia’s disappearing intellectual class. Biographical analysis will outline how they use their artistic agency to reclaim their voices in the (re)negotiation of the BiH identity and memory.

4.3. The Departed: Biographical Accounts of (Dis)connection

Looking at the life stories of the interviewed artists through the lens of Fritz Schütze's biographical process structures was key to unlocking the connections between the four individual biographical accounts, but also for contextualizing them within larger social conditions and collective fates of BiH cultural producers. Juxtaposing Schütze's process structures (actions, institutions, trajectories, and transformations) against the system of codes related to the research question provided an additional avenue for interpretation and understanding of the artists' agency and the purpose of their work.

The *trajectories* in the lives of the interviewed female transnational artists weave a rich tapestry of the exodus of the intellectual class from post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. As different as their individual trajectories of migration and subsequent identity formation were, they share a discontent with patriarchy and ethnonationalism as the main organizing principles of the post-war BiH society. This disillusion has kept them outside of the country and in some cases, disconnected from the audience and art scene both in the homeland and within the BiH community in Vienna.

The *institutional* process structures refer to the phases of the artists' biographies in which educational institutions were determining the course of their action. These phases tell the background story of how the artists found their individual expression, rekindling the connection to their homeland in the process. For some, the institutional influences brought about a "political turn" towards engaged art, for others a "discovery" of their cultural heritage as a source of inspiration. For some, this path was forged through the support and encouragement of their mentors, for others against their resistance.

The process structures of *actions* and *transformations* in their biographies manifest themselves through their artistic practices, as well as through their contacts to audiences and artists in their homeland and transnational community. As they process the trajectories of migration and trauma in their work, female transnational artists create space for a feminist and post-colonial (re)negotiation of identity and memory, providing an alternative to the ethnonationalist narratives that dominate the BiH discourse today.

Each of the four interviewed artists represents a different group of BiH women in terms of the experience of war and their post-war trajectories. Three of the four interviewed artists belong to the "children of the war" generation: I1, I2, and I4 were born in the last years of Yugoslavia. This generation, today in their thirties, was particularly hard hit by emigration. Many were taken out of the country by their families as child refugees, such as I1 and I4. Some returned after the war to participate in the post-war reconstruction, only to leave again as adults, driven

out by the lack of opportunities (I4). Yet more grew up in the war and emigrated early in their career, like I2, faced not only with an abysmal economic perspective, but with a post-war patriarchal, xenophobic, and homophobic society steeped in corruption and kleptocracy. I2 is not only the voice of the “children of the war” generation, but also a rare voice of Bosnian feminist and post-colonial thought, of the young (female) intellectual resistance that has been systematically (albeit indirectly) expelled.

Different trajectories of migration and identity of BiH child refugees are represented in the biographies of I1 and I4. For I1, leaving the country as a child meant severing ties and having this aspect of her identity taken away. She thus represents Bosnian children who fled persecution with their families and were stripped of their belonging to the BiH community along the way. As she struggles with “not knowing where she came from” and tries to mend this phantom pain through her work, she gives a voice to this forgotten group, reclaiming her place in the BiH “imagined community” (Anderson 1983).

Although I4 spent her childhood as a refugee in Germany, she returned to BiH after the war in her formative adolescent years and helped rebuild a community of returnees from the rubbles of the war. This experience closely aligned her individual identity with the national identity of the newly independent BiH. Although she has lived outside of the country most of her life, her proud “Bosnianness” makes her a voice for the faction of BiH youth that aims to recreate and reinforce a united national identity over ethnic allegiances.

The “middle-generation” of cultural producers, as I3 refers to herself and her peers, were active contributors to the BiH cultural scene in the Yugoslav era and have predominantly left the country during the war. Her work (and the work of many BiH artists of this generation around the world) represents the missing link between BiH cultural production within Yugoslavia and today. It highlights the artificial discontinuity of cultural identity and memory produced by the ethnonationalist discourses of division, which attempt to disown the products of common cultural memory leftover from Yugoslavia and divide the cultural heritage by ethnicity.

The following segment will discuss each artist’s story of migration, reflecting how their paths have shaped their positioning towards their country of origin and the “host” society which they are a part of today. The analysis of trajectories in their biographies aims to address the questions: Why did the artists leave BiH? What were the different circumstances of their departure? Why are they not coming back? How are the trajectories of migration linked to their identity formation processes, and how are they reflected in their art? Comparing different biographical accounts will contextualize the artists’ trajectories within the larger context of cultural producers’ dispersion from post-war BiH.

Between BiH and Vienna: Trajectories of Migration and Identity

In the context of (post-)conflict transnational biographies, the ‘trajectories’ are particularly interesting, as biographical phases (“process structures”) in which the actor loses control over their life due to extraneous conditions (Schütze 1984, as cited by Siuoti 2017: 184). Schütze’s trajectories are related to the concept of ‘biographical disruptions’ often used in biographical research to pinpoint major events in the narrator’s life and analyze their agency and personal transformation around these points. Whether migration is considered a *trajectory* linked to collective fate or an example of “social *action* par excellence”, as Apitzsch and Siuoti discuss (s. Chapter 2), it represents a biographical disruption bound to be reflected in all other spheres of life.

Three of the four interviewed artists share the experience of being a war refugee: I1 and I4 were 5-year old children when their families fled to Slovenia and Germany (respectively) at the outset of the war in 1992. I3 left Sarajevo “in the middle of the war” in 1994, as a 22-year old musicology student. She received refugee status in Germany, moving to Austria to continue her studies a year later on a student visa. Aside from this initial biographical disruption, their migration trajectories took very different turns. While I1 grew up in Slovenia, I4’s life was uprooted again in 1998, as Germany revoked refugee status to BiH citizens and her family returned to Bosnia. Austria, on the other hand, did not revoke refugee status to BiH citizens. Although in the specific case of I3 this did not play a role (by the end of the war she was residing in Austria on a student visa), this policy was instrumental in shaping the BiH diasporic community in Vienna as it is today.

All three artists who left the country during the war emphasize the reluctance to do so. For I1 and I4, fleeing the war is their first memory - their life stories start with this disruption and are shaped by the attempts to regain control. I1 starts her narration with her parent’s decision to leave Sarajevo:

“My parents were a bit naive when the war happened and they honestly admit this: ‘We were so naive!’ They had friends who knew what was about to happen a year before the war started and they even told them in some fashion, but my folks were like ‘ma de bolan (quintessentially Bosnian expression meaning ‘come on’), what are you talking about’. They told me this *story*, they wanted to stay, they wanted to **stay in Sarajevo**, but they left because me and my brother were small children and people told them ‘go for the children’. They are very cute like that, romantic characters of that whole story, ‘we are going to stay, but without guns’, they don’t want to fight, but more like ‘who is going to banish me from here, who would dare ‘...’ (I1: 30.05.2019)

Her account aligns with the Bosnian collective memory related to the beginning of the war. It is the story of a generation kept on notice since World War II and throughout the Cold War, but

blindsided by the possibility of the conflict breaking out from within. As the only person in the sample who experienced the war as an adult, I3 recalls her departure from Sarajevo not as a conscious choice, but as an event outside of her control:

“I left in the middle of the war in 1994...I didn’t actually want to leave but my mom tricked me out of there, she was like: ‘I can’t leave without you’...You know how it is, you want to save your child and there is no other way” (I3: 16.07.2019).

A subtext of guilt emerges from these accounts, particularly in the case of I1 whose identity was shaped most strongly by this trajectory. While her life started like that of all other Sarajevans, including two other interviewed artists who grew up in this proud city, I1 perceives this initial biographical disruption as the moment when her identity was “stolen, taken away from her” (I1: 30.05.2019). Despite an emotional connection to Sarajevo formed through the stories of her parents rather than her own experience, she no longer has the claim to this *genius loci* as a part of her identity. This loss left her with a lifelong feeling of guilt for leaving and “shame for not knowing who I am, who I belong to, where I come from” (I1: 30.05.2019).

At least three generations of I1’s family were shaped by forced migration and subsequent struggles with othering and non-belonging:

“My grandparents came to Sarajevo between two World Wars fleeing the fascists in the coastal part of Slovenia. And there was a big community of Slovenians in Sarajevo at the time. My last name actually used to end in the Slovenian hard c (č) but they changed it into the Bosnian soft c in Sarajevo (ć). My grandfather was always seen as Slovenian in Bosnia, and as Bosnian in Slovenia. And when you call someone Bosnian in Slovenia, it’s a slur. So my identity jumps back and forth...And then I came to Vienna and they were like ‘Yugo!’ Again! (rolls her eyes and sighs)” (I1: 30.05.2019)

She refers to the trajectories of forced migration and identity struggle as her family’s “intergenerational trauma”. Her own childhood and youth in Slovenia were dominated by the identity battles of the 1990s post-Yugoslav space. Othered and bullied by school children for being Bosnian and not being able to pronounce Slovenian like a native speaker, she made assimilation her *raison d’être*:

“To survive, I had to assimilate so completely - that was my main goal: to assimilate. My Slovenian became so perfect that people couldn’t tell any more where I came from: not the way I look, nor my behavior, nor my accent revealed this. And I always thought that something was wrong with me, I always felt guilty and I always struggled with this. After I changed all these schools, I came to the teacher one day and all proud of my language skills I was talking, talking, talking, and she said to me: ‘This is not OK, your language and the way you speak is not OK.’ And in my head I was like ‘Oh my God, I failed again! I failed again!’ And I said: ‘Why, what is wrong with the way I speak?’ and she said ‘Your

dialect is too strong!’ (sighs) So I didn’t speak like a foreigner any more, but now like a hillbilly.” (I1: 30.05.2019)

Assimilation in Slovenia came at a price: she no longer sounds “Bosnian” when she speaks her native language, but rather speaks it with a Slovenian accent, which makes her reluctant to identify as Bosnian and self-conscious about using her voice on behalf of this community in her work. Language is a source of othering and insecurity, but also a tool of self-empowerment and transformation, as her capability to master languages to perfection becomes her main coping strategy, her ticket to belonging in Slovenia, Italy, and Austria.

This ongoing negotiation of the different “I positions” of her diasporic self (Bhatia 2002, s. Diasporic Identities) is the primary creative impulse in I1’s work. Her artistic transformation comes from re-establishing the connection with her roots from a place of embracing her hybridity. It is important to note here that the hybridity and tension within BiH artists’ identities do not only stem from migration, but also from the ethnic and religious diversity of their roots. This uniquely Bosnian dual struggle with (non-)belonging represents the starting point for identity (re)negotiation in BiH transnational art, creating space for a collective BiH identity “which lives with and through, not despite, difference” (Hall 1994: 235).

In light of the attempts of ethnic groups to own cultural heritage in the post-war climate (Kolind 2008, s. Chapter 1: Context), I1’s reinterpretation of BiH traditional music from a place of multiethnic and transnational identification becomes in itself a political act. By singing traditional Bosnian songs with a Slovenian accent in “Sevdah of Lost Identity”, she reclaims her origin story and restores the value of the Bosnian aspects of her cultural identity that have been depreciated as lesser in the host society of her childhood and youth. At the same time, she gives a voice to the many children of BiH who shared her fate. Although all interviewed artists acknowledge that the diasporic community as a whole has been “written off” by those who stayed, the generation that was taken out of the country as children uniquely struggles with issues of identity as a forgotten part of the body politic. Drawing from the musical heritage of BiH in the (re)construction of her own hybrid identity, I1 reinterprets the familiar cultural references to reflect the modern condition and inscribes diasporic longing for a lost land and a lost identity into BiH cultural memory.

Identity, belonging, and memory play a central role in the biography of the other child refugee in the study as well. However, in contrast to I1, I4’s connection to her homeland was fiercely maintained by her family during her childhood years in Germany, culminating in their decision to return to BiH after the war. Upon her family’s return in 1998, she spent her formative years volunteering in community rebuilding, preparing homes for other returnees, and organizing commemorative events for the victims of the war. While for I1 the initial trajectory of forced

migration and the coping strategies of assimilation in a new context resulted in a complex relationship to her roots and a life-long struggle with identity, for I4 it was the pressure to assimilate as a returnee to BiH that has molded her subjectivity around the collective identity of the new nation as the cornerstone of her sense of self. She recalls the shock of return:

“I now think returning to Bosnia from Germany was the best thing that could have ever happened to me, but then, getting this Abschiebung (Deportation), that was a disaster. My mom always used to talk about how beautiful Bosnia is, but then when we returned, Bosnia after Germany, everything was in ruins, looked horrible (laughs). I spoke German better than Bosnian at the time. And German schools were different, we didn’t learn the things that they learned down there, they knew a lot more by the time they were in 4th grade. I don’t know how to explain it but Sana (Sanski Most, BiH) was a town liberated by the famous 17th Brigade, by the 5th Corps and all those soldiers stayed there, it was very religious. [...] And I felt this identity issue everywhere, in Sanski Most because I have a Catholic name and everyone around me was Muslim. It sounds stupid but I had to prove myself as a Muslim, I had to cram religion class in advance because the teacher would always single me out”. (I4: 04.09.2019)

As a reaction to the many uprootings in her childhood, memory becomes central in I4’s identity and work: she narrates her life like a historian, remembering the exact date of every event, numbers of victims of different war crimes, names and quotes of military commanders, and other significant actors. Even though she was a small child and was, in fact, thousands of kilometers away as those events took place, war stories were the soundtrack both of her childhood years in Germany and her youth back in Bosnia. Her work is an expression of this witnessing; it focuses on the experiences of her neighbors and relatives, rather than the generalized faceless trauma. Thus the migration trajectories that have shaped her individual identity and localized belongings provide an authentic contribution to the construction of collective trauma and memory in her work, achieving what Budryte (2016) refers to as the “disaggregation of monumental trauma” (s. Theoretical Framework).

I1 and I4 share another similarity in their migration patterns: they both migrated again at age 18: I1 to Milan, Italy to pursue her studies and I4 to Vienna in a bid for family reunification, starting her education as an artist soon after. In I1’s biography, this second migration represents a process structure of *action* as the first independent voluntary move in pursuit of her professional aspirations. It brought her a sense of liberation, an escape from an environment of constant othering to a place where she was “just another *foreigner*” (I1: 30.05.2019); where her identity could be expanded away from ethnicity and fade away into anonymity. For I4, however, migration to Vienna was a decision made by her parents, against her wishes, which reinforced her “diasporic boundary maintenance” (Brubaker 2005) in the host society and her resolve to

maintain intense social ties to Bosnia, in effect living between Vienna and Sanski Most (BiH) until today.

Interestingly, the artists who arrived as refugees and stayed in their host countries (I1 and I3), unlike I4 who returned and spent a large portion of her life in post-war BiH, reject the label 'refugee' as a part of their biography. The narratives of refugees being a burden to the prosperous Western societies, particularly present since the 2015 'refugee crisis', seem to have been internalized. I3 emphasizes that she was a student, not a refugee in Austria in the 1990s, although it is difficult to imagine that the host society at the time differentiated between her and the hundreds of thousands of her countrymen and -women who also fled the war but had the status of de-facto refugees. I1 recalls her mother's agency during those first years after fleeing the war to Slovenia:

"It's interesting because I never felt like we were refugees. In this period when it was really, really difficult for us, my mom refused any kind of humanitarian aid for refugees. She said 'I'm old enough, I have arms and legs, I'm going to look for a job'. She learned the language and she went to work, she didn't want to be a refugee. And through this I never experienced that we were refugees...ever! I never say 'we fled to Slovenia' but 'we moved to Slovenia'. Only when I came to Vienna did I first hear this term 'geflüchtet', 'wir sind geflüchtet' (refugee, we are refugees)". (I1: 30.05.2019)

The following segment will discuss the trajectories of trauma in the biographies of the interviewed artists and reflect how they intersect with process structures of transformation to form their notions of individual and collective Bosnian identities. Their memory of war and post-war BiH will be contrasted to the memory of Yugoslavia, to contextualize their individual traumatic experiences within the broader context of cultural trauma in BiH society (Alexander et al. 2004).

Trauma, Memory, and Identity: "The Incredible Strength of the Bosnian Woman"

Analyzing the war and post-war trajectories in the artists' biographical accounts against the background of their memories of Yugoslavia reveals how the turbulent events of the 1990s altered the collective sense of self, thus amounting to cultural trauma (Alexander et al. 2004, s. Theoretical Framework). Their stories offer a distinctly female perspective of war, system change, and mass emigration, as well as an artist's perspective on the cultural losses which resulted from this layered collective trauma. Processes of personal transformation (Schütze 1984) in their biographies are often related to their experienced trauma and the creative ways in which they approach their losses and healing (Husanović 2009). As they channel their experience of the war through their artistic practice, female resilience and resourcefulness emerge as the defining factors of both individual and collective identities.

The Bosnian war was a watershed moment for a long-overdue gendered understanding of trauma, bringing the attention of the United Nations and the International Criminal Court to the issue of mass rape in armed conflict: sexual violence was considered and prosecuted as a crime against humanity for the first time (Simmons 1996). The female experience of the war was thus put on research and artistic agendas both in Bosnia and internationally, shedding light on female suffering in the face of sexual and gender-based violence, but also the uniquely female resilience and agency.

Growing up in besieged Sarajevo, I2 witnessed both sides of the female experience of war, “the incredibly strong tension” between the “complete moral and every other bankruptcy and betrayal of trust” on the one hand and the “awakening of female agency and resistance” on the other (Husanović 2005: 59, translation by the author). These trajectories anchored her identity in the “incredible strength of the Bosnian woman” (I2: 07.06.2019):

“When a war takes place, which always and necessarily happens from the male perspective, the women take over everything. Women are in effect left in a patriarchal society in which there are no men anymore and they recreate a new formula of living: schools, hospitals, infrastructure...And this is the sentiment behind CRVENA’s project about the Anti-fascist Women’s Movement in Yugoslavia. Because we can, of course, look to the Western and American feminists of the 60s and onwards, but we must realize the history of our grandmothers who ran the world when the men went to war: this solidarity under extreme circumstances should be the DNA of our feminism.”

Left to her own devices alongside her sister (also a prominent artist in BiH today), I2 had to fight for survival and was “forced to grow up overnight” (I2: 07.06.2019). Her experience of the war “shaped who she is today as a woman and as an artist more than anything else” (ibid.), not only in terms of the themes and purpose of her work (s. Chapter “Meet the Artists”), but also in the way her art is executed: always on a budget and grounded in resourcefulness as a marker of Bosnian identity.

Narrating her childhood and her work as an artist, I2 repeats the phrase “*Snadi se!*”, meaning “Find a way!”, as a motto which encapsulates what it means to be Bosnian. Adaptability and resourcefulness were learned from grandmothers, mothers, and sisters: the admiration for the “survival skills” of Bosnian women was the subtext of every biographical narration. For I1, it was her mother’s strength that got them through the difficult times as refugees during the war. This capability and self-reliance define her perception of BiH women:

“I am really fascinated by women not only from Bosnia but from former Yugoslavia in general, they have a higher dose of confidence, some kind of...how should I put it...life wisdom. Somehow they know what to do. I have a feeling that they know how to take care of things, *juggling* their husband, kids, work such as it is, and it fascinates me very much,

that type of *survival skills*. They seem to me smarter, more capable than I am, especially with the whole visual effect (laughs)...Even before I became interested in feminism, I had the impression through my mom, my nana, my grandma, that these were very, very strong women, not even aware of the power they had.” (I1: 30.05.2019)

In this context, the recovered *herstory* of the Anti-fascist Women’s Movement in WWII Yugoslavia (s. Chapter “Maintaining Ties”) represents a key narrative in the construction of collective BiH identity and female solidarity. The other key aspect of collective identity that came up in every interview was humor, rooted in resilience, always slightly self-deprecating and dark, but reliably carrying the message that “we will find a way” (I2: 07.06.2019).

The other side of the gendered perspective on trauma is the specifically male experience of the war and the ways in which the trauma is embedded in post-war masculinity. The stories of the artists’ fathers, brothers, uncles, and friends portray a culture steeped in silent depression connected to unaddressed trauma. Reflecting on the experiences of her brother, a “sensitive soul” whose willingness to show emotion “has always been held against him” (I1: 30.05.2019), I1 illustrates how patriarchy is maintained in the Balkans through the oppression of men, not just women. Recalling how her father mentally “disappeared” in 1992, I2 points out the general problem of fatherhood in BiH: fathers carry their trauma in silence, remaining emotionally unavailable to their children, particularly to daughters. Stories of male trauma are omnipresent in I4’s biography, from her father who was “hunted” in their hometown as a prominent community member and closely escaped death when he fled the country in 1992, to her stepfather, uncle, boyfriend, and many neighbors and relatives who were imprisoned and tortured in concentration camps in her hometown. Her stepfather only broke his silence on the witness stand at the ICC in The Hague. Most other men she met with during her research for “Prjedor ‘92” were not willing or able to speak of their trauma. Growing up with war stories, both as a child refugee in Germany and as a young returnee to BiH, she has accepted trauma as an integral part of her own and of Bosnian collective identity. This position enables her to speak on behalf of those who cannot:

“For me it’s normal to talk about the war, because I grew up with that, many others grew up with silence. This is our history and we cannot ignore it. We all know what happened and we have to keep living. But we have to live **with** it and we cannot let it be forgotten.” (I4: 04.09.2019)

For I3, part of the reason for distancing herself from her social network in the homeland was the prevalent mood of depression and hopelessness:

“Post-war Sarajevo is all about grief, sadness, misery, victimization, death, loss, poverty, for 25 years now. (sigh) After World War II, Germany recovered in a few decades, Tito put Yugoslavia on its feet 10 years after the war, infrastructure worked, everything was

running. But in Bosnia the majority has tucked themselves cozily into that feeling of heaviness, and adversity, and pain. It's pure psychology, after a while you start to love your pain. It becomes a comfort zone and you don't want to leave it because you feel good there. I just don't have the patience to get into that flow, it brings me down horribly. And you can't get away from those stories, you know, because everybody is terribly patriotic." (I3: 16.07.2019)

However, as omnipresent as these themes may be in daily life, there is very little awareness in BiH on the connection between the untreated trauma of war and the latent or overt depression that permeates its society today, 25 years later. I1 recalls how it took her years to understand, through her art practice, that the experience of the war and fleeing violence was at the root of her struggle with anxiety:

"I have had anxiety attacks since I was a child and when they come they last for days. And yesterday I was in my studio alone, practicing for this performance that's coming up and I said out loud for the first time things that I have never said, such as 'I am afraid of the Serbs'. [...] And I always thought: 'Ah war. It didn't really do anything'... But yesterday I realized that it did. It was a big change and a trauma that I maybe didn't even understand then. I was four and a half years old...And of those first years in Slovenia I almost don't remember anything...But I remember when I was eight or nine, I would go to sleep and all of a sudden a wave of premonition would overcome me: something horrible was about to happen. At that young age I already thought about death and I felt that feeling you feel when you die, that nothingness. And that instilled in me a horrible fear." (I1: 30.05.2019)

A month after our conversation, I attended I1's performance of the "Sevdah of Lost Identity". She opened the performance with the words: "I'm afraid of the Serbs, I'm afraid of the Croats, I'm afraid of the Muslims", thus morphing her personal trauma into a message of universal resistance to ethnonationalism. Feminist artistic practice can thus provide insights needed to raise the collective awareness of the ways in which the traumatic past shapes the present and the future of Bosnian identity, rooting the collective sense of unity and particularity (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995) in the shared traumatic experiences. Practices of witnessing in transnational art can reach a wider and more diverse audience and help break the silence on in-group atrocities which has been prevalent in post-war interethnic encounters, reinforcing ethnic boundaries as a result (Mijić 2018a).

Contrasting the artists' memories of the Yugoslav-era BiH with their analysis of post-war BiH society reveals the many levels on which the trauma has dislodged the collective patterns of meaning and entered the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity, constituting cultural trauma as theorized by Alexander et al. (2004). War and violence, system change from socialism to neoliberal capitalism, mass emigration, and a loss of cultural heritage have precipitated a dislodging of the system of values, a "transition in mentality" (I2: 07.06.2019).

All interviewed artists interpret the de-facto segregation along ethnic lines in post-war BiH as an assault on (pre-war) Bosnian identity. Ethnonationalism and trauma have effectively erased the collective memory of living with diversity and replaced it with the “Balkanistic discourses of eternal hatred” (Majstorović/Turjačanin 2013: 2). Independently of one another, each artist emphasized the memory of BiH as the most ethnically diverse state in former Yugoslavia. Having grown up in diverse families, they assert the habit of living with difference under the banner of “brotherhood and unity” as the essence of Bosnian cultural identity.

Aside from the war, system change represents another layer of cultural trauma because it brought about a shift in mentality:

“In post-war BiH the value of the **collective** is gone. Privatization destroyed the public sector built by the people of Yugoslavia with their own hands. People live from day to day, under the motto ‘we’ll see tomorrow’. It’s a constant state of crisis, a constant state of war, whether it’s the political tension or the ecological disasters. In Sarajevo there have been days when the air was so polluted we had to wear masks outside like they do in China. The water quality is terrible, this is probably where the next war will take place. And life has been superficially normalized but the trauma is left unaddressed. The young generations haven’t experienced the war first hand, it’s been 25 years, but they still live our war. Through the media they are engaged in constant replays of the past.” (I2: 07.06.2019)

As the only person in the study who experienced the dissolution of Yugoslavia as an adult, I3 draws a stark comparison between the two systems:

“Life in Yugoslavia was very rich, the state supported almost everything, music, sports, creativity, science, education. Workers had rights that the workers here can only dream about. They were building coastal resorts for the steel workers! And no one was allowed there except the steel workers and their families and this was the most beautiful part of the coast, views, beaches, phenomenal. I don’t know how much vacation they had, I think 3 weeks in the summer, and 1 week or 2 in the winter, and for the kids, child support, a bunch of things where you felt like a king as a worker. If you lived in the city of course. If you lived in the country side, that was another story. But I never in my life wanted for anything, everyone was kind and happy, the neighbors were phenomenal, those are my memories. And then some idiots came and destroyed the country, sold it out. And the fact that it was so easy to ravage all that in only a few years, **that** is shocking. I don’t know what happened to those people that they turned on a system that gave them so much. And now you have pensioners digging through trash containers for food. It took me quite a few years to let go of that anger and disappointment...” (I3: 16.07.2019)

I2 refers to the mass emigration as cultural trauma as well. Everyone she knows has either emigrated or plans to emigrate and those who cannot are “left feeling like losers”, with a general sense of lesser worth “permeating every pore of society” (I2: 07.06.2019). I1 echoes the feeling of inferiority amongst emigre artists as well:

“There is this sense of shame, like: poor Bosnians, now they want to be artists too! They had the war and now they need jobs...” (I1: 30.05.2019)

The inferiority permeating the collective sense of self is linked to the devastating loss of cultural heritage. Monuments of cultural heritage, particularly sacral architecture, were systematically destroyed in the Bosnian war, as a part of an effective strategy to erase the other ethnic group’s identity and, therefore, its very existence (Boom 2013: 20). The most important historical monuments have been rebuilt after the war, but these superficial gestures did not address the underlying trauma of losing the authentic objects of cultural memory. Post-war monuments are being built by each ethnic group separately in attempts to seize control of the reconstruction of memory. At the same time, monuments from the Yugoslav era are abandoned and left to fall into ruin; their decay symbolizes the rupture in cultural memory caused by the ethnonationalist rejection of a shared past.

For I3, the material cultural losses incurred in the war make the BiH condition incomparably worse than that of other post-Yugoslav states:

“RTV Sarajevo was a steward of cultural heritage in BiH. It was all going in a very healthy direction and if that continued after the war there would be no problem. But after that massive bombing and the ruins and everything, people have been hoarding those archives and now somebody is sitting on them like a hen on eggs and won’t let anyone hear them. This is not the case in Zagreb and Belgrade, for example. In Zagreb and Belgrade it is easier to develop the culture for the simple reason that they didn’t really have a war. I mean Belgrade had the bombing ... And Zagreb had war but it was short, it was a couple of days, nothing that would fundamentally alter the fabric of society. It can’t be compared to Sarajevo and Bosnia. Their big cities are intact, all their archives are there, nothing was destroyed and burned...” (I3: 16.07.2019)

These losses resulted in the disruption of cultural memory, reflected in the slow post-war recovery of the cultural sector and the disorientation in the (re)construction of cultural identity. The “reservoir of objectivized culture from which to draw markers of identity and belonging” (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995: 130) has thus been depleted, destabilizing the society’s self-image. Asked about what constitutes BiH cultural identity, I2 summarized the post-war condition: “Our new identity is the search for identity”.

The following section will discuss the institutional process structures in the artists’ biographies, explicating how the educational institutions in different countries along their migration routes affected the artists’ search for their own identity, as well as their positioning towards their country of origin and other diasporic sites.

Finding her Voice: Political Artist? Migrant Artist? Bosnian Artist?

The institutional process structures in the four biographies refer to the artists' experiences taking place in the framework of institutions, in this case, art high schools and universities. These segments of their biographical narration tell the background story of how they became artists, how they found their voice and what influenced the positioning to their country of origin in their art. Schütze's first narrative figure, actors, is also relevant here because it reveals a strong influence of feminist BiH and international artists in their development.

Art was present in the lives of all four interviewed artists since early childhood. I1's parents were architects, which shaped her observation and aesthetic sensibilities. It also instilled in her an emotional connection to places based on their architecture: her parents feel at home in Vienna because the architecture is similar to that of Sarajevo from the Austro-Hungarian period. I2 grew up in a family of cultural workers; her grandfather was an architect, her father, a graphic designer and painter, her aunt and sister artists. Before the war, her father worked in the National Museum of BiH (established and built during the Austro-Hungarian rule), which she recalls fondly as "her Disneyland" (I2: 07.06.2019). Although no one in her family was a professional musician, music was omnipresent in I3's childhood. She credits her father with her love of music, who often played traditional Balkan music on his accordion at home, but also emphasizes that music education was an integral part of Yugoslav culture.

The artists' experiences with art education span different cultures, pre and post-war Bosnia, Slovenia, Italy, and Austria, but within a relatively short timeframe, from the mid-1990s for the oldest interviewed artist to 2015 for the youngest. For I1, I2, and I4, the culture of their art academies brought about a political turn towards 'engaged art', but in different ways. Unlike I2 and I4, I1 was encouraged to tell her story as a child of the BiH war:

"I had tremendous support from these professors in Milan, they saw that I may have an affinity and they pushed me a lot. That school was quite politically active and they pushed political art. As a 'Yugo', as someone from BiH, I fit very well in their mold of a political artist then. A lot opened for me there, I really found myself. I discovered all these feminist artists...Marina Abramović, Sanja Iveković, Regina José Galindo, and the Americans Yvonne Rainer and Judy Chicago, I was kind of like wow! A new world! (laughs)" (I1: 30.05.2019)

For I2, in contrast, the art academy in post-war Bosnia was a site of oppression:

"The academy was extremely backward and absolutely dominated by men, especially sculpture was considered to be out of reach for women. I had to be three times better than the guys and it was only my crazy persistence that got me anywhere within it. When I was chosen for the Young Biennale, the school administration, all men of course, was the first hurdle to get over. But I wouldn't take no for an answer. It was always the same chorus

from the professors: ‘You can’t do this, you can’t do that’, and I resented them for their patriarchal attitude, but it did make me a fighter. I was like ‘I will show you that I can’. Contemporary art was not allowed, although professors dabbled in it. But there was zero space for political art. The turning point for me was when Alma Suljević came and tasked us with producing a contemporary piece. This was my first time to use video as a medium and I made a video about war rape, which is going to the Biennale this year. This was a cathartic moment for me on a personal and professional level. (I2: 07.06.2019)

While Viennese art schools were more open for political art than the Sarajevo Art Academy, addressing the topics I4 wanted to undertake meant constant conflict with the professors:

“Since the first semester I would always choose war-related subjects, ‘Einmal Flüchtling, Immer Flüchtling’ (‘Once a Refugee, Always a Refugee’), ‘Irony in War’, ‘Art about War’, and such. When I did ‘Art about War’ I was told that it was impossible that people in Prijedor had to wear white bands on their arms, like Jews did in Germany, that I should not hypothesize things that were not proven. But they are proven. We have a verdict at The Hague tribunal, a ruling against Duško Tadić. And everyone in Prijedor knows this, it was proclaimed on the radio on 30 May 1992, that all non-Serbian population must wear white bands on their arms to show loyalty to the Serbian Army and put up a white sheet on their house to show that they don’t want war. That was the beginning of everything. But I wasn’t allowed to speak on behalf of my community, only on my own behalf”.

Being a female Muslim immigrant student added another layer of tension in times of heightened islamophobia and xenophobia in Austria, fueled by the ‘refugee crisis’ and frequent terror attacks in the EU at the time. Her conflicts with the professors at the Academy of Applied Arts started from the first week, as she protested one professor’s “rant about the poor integration of Muslim Yugoslav immigrants”, which he “deemed relevant for his introductory lecture of art history” (I4: 04.09.2019). Mastering German to perfection during her childhood years as a refugee in Germany gave her the confidence to stand up against xenophobia: “Even though I couldn’t be any whiter, I don’t wear a hijab to school, and I speak perfect German, everybody at the academy knew from that first day who I was and where I came from” (I4: 04.09.2019). These conflicts continued throughout her studies at the academy, not only with the professors but also with feminist student organizations on the position of women in Islam. The ignorance and fear she encountered at the academy inspired her to actively engage in educating her fellow students and professors on Bosnian Islam as a moderate, European strand of Islam and on the Islamic community in general.

After the Charlie Hebdo Attacks, I4 was invited to speak to the student body as a “representative of the Muslim community”. Ironically, the professors who criticized her projects for speaking on behalf of a community were now inviting her to speak on behalf of the world’s third-largest religion (I4: 04.09.2019):

“I got up there and I said: ‘Before you ask me questions I have a question for you: why did you invite me today to hear the Muslim point of view on a terror attack in France? Because I am the only Muslim you know?’ Silence. ‘Since I started this school you’ve been telling me that I can’t speak on behalf of a community, only on my own behalf. But now you want me to speak on behalf of a billion people. I’m not going to do that’. [...] And while the lights were off I put on a hijab. The lights came on and I’m standing there in my hijab. And I was like: ‘How do you see me now?’”

Similarly to the case of I2, the unsupportive institutional framework molded I4’s identity as a political artist and reinforced the orientation towards Bosnia in her art. Her experiences are relevant because they expose xenophobia in places widely seen as bastions of tolerance and progress, such as the academic and artistic circles in the West. They also touch upon the subject of identity politics in art and identity ascriptions transnational artists experience in the host societies.

Transnational artists from the Global South are expected by the host societies in the Global North to be ambassadors of their culture (Abdelhady 2011); their identity is not a neutral category, whether they use it as a resource or consider it a limitation. In contrast, artists migrating from one country of the Global North to another are considered cosmopolitan, just as other migrants within the Global North are deemed ‘expats’ rather than ‘immigrants’. The discomfort some interviewed artists feel around being labeled ‘Bosnian artists’ or ‘migrant artists’ does not, therefore, stem from a denial of their origin; indeed their work often references BiH cultural heritage and history. The issue lies rather in being seen exclusively through this prism, regardless of the scope of their work, especially considering the negative connotations the labels ‘Bosnian’, ‘Yugo’, and ‘migrant’ have in Austria.

Still being pigeonholed into her origin after 25 years in Vienna, I3 was reluctant to participate in this study because it was looking at ‘BiH female artists in Vienna’:

“You know, I’m very sensitive to these diasporic, integrative topics...When I read your e-mail I was kind of like ... hmmm... but you sounded kind of cute with it all, so I said OK. Otherwise I immediately hang such inquiries up on the nail. Journalists always ask me - if you are from Bosnia and you live in Austria - they exclusively ask you: ‘as a Bosnian in Austria, how do you’ this and that. Then I say, ‘If you have a question to ask me about music, I would be happy to talk about it. If not, I’m leaving’. [...] The world is so poisoned today, you should only focus on your work and on the fruit of that work. And from that standpoint you no longer have a nationality.” (I3: 16.07.2019)

I3 rejects the label ‘Bosnian artist’: her connection to BiH has been largely severed over the years, partly due to disillusion with the country and its people, partly over time and refocusing her attention on building a life and a career in Austria. I1’s reluctance to identify as Bosnian is rooted in self-consciousness about having lost the connection to her country of origin in the

trajectories of migration. On the other hand, I2 and I4 use their identity and their 'otherness' as a resource, being a Bosnian woman is the defining feature of their work and identity as artists.

However, regardless of their positioning towards the country of origin, all the artists interviewed seemed to have a complicated relationship with the BiH (and Ex-YU) diasporic community in Vienna. Diasporic cultural organizations are perceived as "too oriented on religion" (I1: 30.05.2019) and the BiH diasporic community in Vienna as an extension of the conditions that made them leave BiH in the first place. While there was sporadic overlap between their social networks and the Ex-YU diasporic community, they were wary of being seen as playing specifically to this audience and furthering the narrative of 'parallel societies'. The discourse of (non-)integration of the 'Yugo' minority in the host society is the subtext of their reluctance to engage in the construction of BiH diasporic culture, but also of their ambivalence in terms of identification and belonging in Austria. In line with Ana Mijić's (2019) research mentioned in Chapter 1, all interviews referenced the Orientalizing discourses in the Viennese society, in which the 'Yugo' minority represents a sphere "between the own and the foreign", "neither complete strangers nor full-fledged members of the Austrian in-group" (Mijić 2019: 14, citing Todorova 2009). The exoticization of the Balkans by the host society is both a hurdle to belonging and a resource for emancipation through difference:

"Integration, integration, integration...This is not about us at all, it's about them. And they don't know it yet but they will realize. Because their own folklore identity was taken over by Hitler's boot in the Second World War and they couldn't sing their music for 50 years, they were ashamed...Only now are they going back to their folk culture, but they need that exoticism of the Balkans, of Eastern Europe, even of the Middle East. Although they are fighting it terribly, but that is what they need to relax, accept themselves, accept their history" (I3: 16.07.2019).

Other interviewed artists shared this sentiment that the integration discourse was about othering and hierarchization rather than empowerment of migrants. As fluent as their German was or as valuable and desirable their contributions to the culture, they could never integrate enough to truly belong. I1 compares her experiences in different host societies:

"Italians are so confident in their identity, you kind of become a part of it all very quickly without being pushed into it. And here I feel under pressure, like I have to do now as the Austrian does, think like her, work like her, live like her..." (I1: 30.05.2019).

Interestingly, none of the artists saw Vienna as their 'final destination'. Although they all had an emotional connection to the city, their residence here seemed to be somewhat unintentional and impermanent, a product of circumstance rather than a conscious decision. Thus the conclusion of the Asboth/Nadjivan (2017: 212) study of the BiH diaspora in Vienna proved true: "they seem to be able to adapt everywhere, but share the intimate feeling of belonging nowhere".

Maintaining Ties: Factors of Inclusion/Exclusion from the BiH public sphere

Although all interviewed artists acknowledge their disillusion with their society of origin, all but one actively maintain contact with the BiH art scene. In fact, more effort seems to be expended on maintaining connections to fellow artists and audiences in BiH than within the BiH diasporic community in Vienna. These efforts are hindered by a lack of institutional support both in their country of origin and in the diaspora. In both contexts, the artists' work receives media coverage and critical acclaim, but little financial support and exposure to a wider audience.

Transnational artists' experiences with BiH cultural institutions echo Veso Sovilj's claim that "the existence of the Bosnian artist is a miracle" (s. Chapter 1: Context). Despite being a well-connected graduate of the Sarajevo Art Academy and an internationally acclaimed rising star of the city's art scene, I2 was not exempt from the 'ethnicity quota' as the main organizing principle of the country's cultural policy. She highlights the absurdity of this system using the example of BiH's representation at the Venice Biennale, outraged over BiH being the only country in Europe not to be represented at this prominent art event (s. Chapter 1).

For I4, whose work addresses the forgotten war crimes, the ethnonationalist political landscape in BiH represents the main hurdle to reaching a diverse audience. Despite investing an enormous effort into contacts with the media, cultural institutions, and even politicians at the highest level, her work gets significant attention in the majority Muslim entity (BiH Federation), but is banned from the majority Serbian entity (Republic of Srpska). Her 2014 exhibition "Portrait of A Country" was opened by the Muslim member of the BiH Presidency at the time, Haris Silajdžić, and one of Bosnia's most prominent artists, Affan Ramić. In contrast, in her hometown of Prijedor (Republic of Srpska), local authorities recently denied permission to install her nomadic memorial "Prijedor '92", despite its universalist and humanist message. Through her work, she thus actively engages in the struggle against the ethnonationalist political forces on the battleground of memory.

All artists report absolute lack of support from BiH institutions for transnational art in Austria and on the international scene. Not only is this reflected in the lack of financial support, but also in terms of communication and event attendance:

"In 2008. and 2009. I organized two Sevdah concerts here at Theater Akzent, invited Zehra Deović, Nedžad Salković, Emina Zečaj. Nine e-mails to the Sarajevo Ministry of Culture. Nine! I didn't get one answer. And here there was television, radio, ORF, people came because of me! It was a really beautiful evening. And when you think about it, you only have one life, I can't spend my energy on a society that has no interest, on people sitting there who have no interest". (I3: 16.07.2019)

For I3, the lack of “serious institutions” is the reason behind the incoherence of the BiH transnational art scene in Vienna, despite the size of the BiH minority in the city. She applauds the initiatives by the “few motivated individuals”, such as the Society of BiH Academics in Austria and the BiH Cultural Platform, but contrasts their efforts to the “disgraceful” lack of institutional support, illustrated by Bosnia’s inability to bring a cultural attaché to Austria in the 25 years since the war ended. Building a real community around the BiH cultural scene in Vienna, she argues, “needs a robust institutional framework which would coordinate all the well-intentioned individual initiatives” (I3: 16.07.2019).

Other interviewed artists argued that the BiH minority in Vienna had not existed long enough to have its own art scene or an original diasporic cultural expression. Diasporic cultural life is perceived as one-directional and one-dimensional. Transnational cultural organizations are still focused on bringing cultural content from BiH to a nostalgic audience in Vienna, rather than showcasing the work of artists of BiH origin living and working in the city to an audience interested in the future of BiH culture.

Lack of institutional financial support hinders the artists’ connections to the audiences in the home country as well. I3’s last performance in BiH was at the Sarajevo Jazz Festival two years ago, one of Bosnia’s rare internationally renowned events, which was cancelled in 2019 due to a lack of funding. She was set to perform at another festival in Sarajevo in 2019, “Bašćaršijske Noći” (“Bašćaršija Nights”), but her performance was again cancelled due to the lack of financial resources.

A strong sense of solidarity with artists in BiH emerges from the interviews, they are in awe of those who remain in the country. All interviewed artists report of high emigration rates in their social networks. I1 summarizes the general mood: “I spoke to many artists in BiH and they all said, if you want to accomplish something you have to leave. If you stay in Bosnia they will nail you down with a big hammer!” (I1: 30.05.2019). According to I3, the entire ‘middle generation’ of cultural producers, those who experienced the dissolution of Yugoslavia as adults, have left the country in the 1990s. The continuity of cultural production and the right of passage was thus disrupted:

“It’s great that the young people in BiH now want to deal with their musical identity, it’s all very laudable. But the problem is that there is no middle generation any more to lead these young people. Because it’s not about cultural heritage, we have that and it’s beautiful. Bosnia had a cultural identity within Yugoslavia that was...noch und nöcher (more and then some) as they say. It was in Überfluss (overflowing), hanging like ripe fruit on a tree. But the young generations don’t remember this and of course they don’t, how could they.” (I3: 16.07.2019)

Against this background of an art scene struggling against the forces of ethnonationalism, patriarchy and kleptocracy, feminist art initiatives in BiH are seen as the only source of optimism. Independently of one another, three of the five artists in the final selection (including Nataša Mackuljak who was not interviewed) maintained a connection to the feminist Association for Culture and Art (CRVENA) in Sarajevo, co-founded by Lana Čmajčanin. CRVENA's work on uncovering and archiving the forgotten history of the Antifascist Female Front (AFŽ) in WWII Yugoslavia was referenced in three of the four interviews and inspired Mackuljak's contribution to the exhibition "A/Rhythm Heartbeat Detector" (VBKÖ Vienna 2019). The AFŽ project helped create a narrative of memory and identity for BiH feminists both in- and outside of the country: their grandmothers were not just housewives, they were freedom fighters resisting fascism. At a time when reactionary forces are regaining power around the world, and particularly in Europe, the AFŽ *herstory* offers much-needed continuity in the disrupted BiH collective memory. It expands the 'reservoir of identity' (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995) available to BiH women, becoming a source of female empowerment and solidarity across ethnic and national boundaries.

CONCLUSION

A quarter of a century since the war officially ended in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), social conflicts surrounding collective identity and memory continue to rage. As intellectuals and cultural producers emigrate en masse, discourse construction is relinquished to male-dominated domains of ethnonationalist politics and religion. Against this backdrop, this qualitative case study focused on female cultural production within one of the largest BiH diasporic communities – Vienna – and examined the extent to which the first-generation female migrant artists maintain ties to their homeland through their work, social networks, and institutional collaboration. Building upon extensive scholarship on the role of art in the healing and reconciliation processes of post-conflict societies, the research question introduces a transnational and gendered perspective. How do female artistic practices outside of national borders approach the (re)construction of Bosnia's contested memory, trauma, and identity?

Two key insights from cultural studies provided the theoretical framework for this inquiry. The first is the understanding of cultural identity (as well as memory and trauma) as socially constructed and a continuous process between different actors, rather than a passively inherited fact (Hall 1994, Assmann/Czaplicka 1995, Alexander et al. 2004). The second is the claim that cultural identity is not merely represented in art, but actively constituted in it (Hall 1994, Turino 2004). Through this lens, this paper conceptualizes Bosnian post-conflict identity, memory, and trauma as 'battlegrounds' (Laclau/Mouffe 1985), where female transnational artists assert their articulations as an alternative to dominant ethnonationalist narratives.

While previous research of BiH transnational art narrowly focused on specific projects of artistic commemoration of the Yugoslav wars (Karabegović 2014, D'Evie 2014), this paper addresses the larger phenomenon of cultural production in the diaspora, as mass emigration forms new creative hubs outside of BiH. Rather than examining artifacts of diasporic art as the building blocks of cultural memory (Assmann/Czaplicka 1995), the inquiry focuses on the artists' transnational biographies and the ways in which they shape artistic agency and positionality on the metaphorical battleground of Bosnian identity and memory. Biographical interview analysis establishes continuities between key events in the artists' lives - their 'biographical disruptions' – and the narratives of identity, memory, and trauma constructed in their work.

Following Fritz Schütze's (1983) approach, biographical narrative interviews were used to reconstruct and contextualize the female migrant artists' biographies within the larger processes of social change in post-war, post-socialist BiH, with a particular focus on the mass emigration of the intellectual and creative class. Whether they left the country as child refugees, fleeing wartime persecution of 'mixed marriages' they were born into, or later in life due to a

lack of opportunities, the artists' migration trajectories and their disillusion with their society of origin are linked to the ethnonationalist and patriarchal conditions of (post-)war BiH. Their artistic agency is channeled into feminist, post-colonial, and humanist messages, which can be seen as acts of resistance to the dominant discourse of division in BiH today. Although their art always addresses international audiences, by choosing to relate their work to their homeland, the artists in the study share a common purpose of (re)constructing its contested cultural identity.

Consistent with the literature on diasporic cultural production, the interviewed artists' work draws upon the various sites in which their transnational biographies unfold to create hybrid artistic expressions (Turino 2004:14). This hybridity is particularly salient in music, where new interpretations of traditional Bosnian song serve to bridge the cultural gap between the homeland and host society. Visual and conceptual artists take a decidedly more activist stance: feminist and post-colonial critique of collective memory and trauma is central to their work. They use their international platform to counter the ethnonationalist selective amnesia in BiH, confronting the audience with the suffering of others and creating new space for a more courageous empathy. In Austria and internationally, their work addresses a different kind of amnesia, rooted in the detachment from the trauma of the Balkans as the experience of the uncivilized Other. In the context of the host society, their art, therefore, has the emancipatory potential "to constitute us as new kinds of subjects" (Hall 1994: 237) and to carve out for the BiH diasporic community "a strategic space in the social arena from which to speak" (Bartosik-Velez 2004: 61), beyond the discourses of integration and towards a fully-fledged diasporic culture.

Sanja Lasić assimilates the present-day diasporic condition of BiH identity into traditional cultural heritage (and through it into cultural memory) by reinterpreting Bosnian traditional Sevdah music to highlight feminist and queer messages, as well as to address her and her family's trauma of being uprooted by ethnonationalism, shared by many Bosnians around the world. Lana Čmajčanin offers a rare post-colonial feminist perspective on the volatile history of BiH and provides an alternate framework to understand the contemporary identity battles. Her post-colonial work is particularly salient in the BiH diaspora in Vienna, where it opens new avenues for identification beyond the balkanizing gaze of the Austrian majority (Mijić 2019). Nataša Mirković brings traditional BiH music into dialogue with diverse historical and contemporary genres, breathing new life into the country's musical heritage and claiming a space for BiH music in European culture (Sugarman 2004). Anita Zečić focuses on improving Bosnia's image in the world beyond war carnage and post-war poverty. She is also an activist for transitional justice, reminding BiH and the world of the crimes against humanity that were "allowed to happen in the heart of Europe at the end of the 20th century" (I4: 04.09.2019).

The lack of institutional support prevents BiH transnational art from realizing its potential of reaching a wider audience internationally and at home in BiH. While most of the artists maintain contact with art communities in their country of origin, local BiH and international cultural institutions lack the funding, and often the interest, to promote their work and transnational cultural collaboration. As a result, their art remains relatively unknown to BiH audiences both in and outside of the country. Against this background, the demand for Bosnian transnational cultural production would be an interesting topic for future research. As the demographic makeup of the BiH community in Vienna (as well as in other diasporic sites) changes to include young highly skilled migrants, a new diasporic generation is being formed in very different circumstances than its post-war predecessors. While the children of guest workers may have grown up in “educationally alienated settings” (Franz 2011: 153, as cited by Mijić 2019: 5), a new generation of highly-skilled BiH migrants and their children have the potential to spark a new demand for original cultural production aimed at preserving and refining their cultural identities as a new basis for transnational belonging.

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APPENDIX I: ABSTRACT

A quarter of a century since the war officially ended in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), social conflicts surrounding collective identity and memory continue to rage. As intellectuals and cultural producers emigrate en masse, discourse construction is relinquished to male-dominated domains of ethnonationalist politics and religion. Against this backdrop, this qualitative case study focuses on female cultural production taking place in one of the largest hubs of BiH emigration - Vienna. It builds upon extensive scholarship on the role of art in the healing and reconciliation processes of post-conflict societies and introduces a transnational and gendered perspective. How do the female artistic practices outside of national borders address and (re)construct Bosnia's contested memory and identity? Consistent with the literature on diasporic cultural production, biographical interview analysis illustrates how the BiH female artists reference various sites in which their transnational biographies unfold to create hybrid artistic expressions. This hybridity is particularly salient in music, where new interpretations of traditional Bosnian song serve to bridge the cultural gap between the homeland and host society. Visual and conceptual artists take a decidedly more activist stance: feminist and post-colonial critique of collective memory and trauma is central to their work. Although these themes distinguish BiH female art from other diasporic cultural expressions, we cannot speak of a coherent Bosnian art *scene* in Vienna. The artists' reluctance to engage in the construction of BiH diasporic culture, as well as their ambivalence in terms of belonging in Austria, is rooted in the identity-related tension in the host society. In light of the multiple symbolic boundaries at play - both between the Austrian majority and the BiH minority, and within the BiH diasporic community itself - the artists construe their residence in Vienna as somewhat unintentional and impermanent, a product of circumstance rather than a conscious choice.

APPENDIX II: ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein Vierteljahrhundert seit dem offiziellen Kriegsende in Bosnien und Herzegowina (BiH) toben weiterhin soziale Konflikte um kollektive Identität und Erinnerung. Massenhafte Auswanderung der Intellektuellen und Kulturschaffenden hat zur Folge, dass die Gestaltung des Diskurses der männlich dominierten ethno-nationalistischen Politik und Religion überlassen wird. Vor diesem Hintergrund konzentriert sich diese qualitative Studie auf die Frauenkunst in einem der größten Zentren der bosnischen Diaspora - Wien. Sie baut an einer umfangreichen Literatur über die Rolle der Kunst in den Versöhnungsprozessen in Nachkriegsgesellschaften auf und bringt eine transnationale und geschlechtsspezifische Perspektive ein. Wie trägt die Frauenkunst außerhalb nationaler Grenzen dem (Wieder-)Aufbau von der umstrittenen bosnischen Erinnerung und Identität bei? Im Einklang mit der Literatur zur diasporischen Kulturproduktion zeigt die biografische Interviewanalyse, dass die BiH Künstlerinnen hybride Ausdrucksformen schaffen, mit Bezug auf die verschiedenen Orte, die ihre eigenen Identitäten geformt haben. Diese Hybridität ist besonders in der Musik hervorzuheben, wo neue Interpretationen des traditionellen bosnischen Liedes dazu dienen, die kulturelle Kluft zwischen der Heimat und der Aufnahmegesellschaft zu überbrücken. Bildende und konzeptuelle Künstlerinnen sind entschieden politischer: die feministische und postkoloniale Kritik des kollektiven Gedächtnisses und Traumas steht im Mittelpunkt ihrer Arbeit. Obwohl diese Themen bosnische Frauenkunst von anderen diasporischen Ausdrucksformen unterscheiden, können wir nicht von einer kohärenten BiH Kunstszene in Wien sprechen. Die Zurückhaltung der Künstlerinnen, sich am Aufbau der BiH Diaspora-Kultur zu beteiligen, sowie ihre Ambivalenz im Bezug auf die Zugehörigkeit zu Österreich, ist auf komplexe identitätsbezogenen Spannungen in der Aufnahmegesellschaft zurückzuführen. Im Kontext der mehrfachen symbolischen Ausgrenzungen, sowohl zwischen der BiH-Minderheit und der österreichischen Mehrheit, als auch innerhalb der BiH Diaspora selbst, deuten die Künstlerinnen ihren Aufenthalt in Wien als etwas unbeabsichtigt und temporär, eher ein Produkt der Umstände als eine bewusste Entscheidung.