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Taking a stand in times of violent societal changes: Belgrade and Zagreb feminists' positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991-2000)

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Prologue

Throughout 2005 I was on a quest for a topic of my master's thesis which would also serve as a sort of introduction to my then already anticipated doctorate research. The theme needed to be not only of scholarly relevance but also a burning societal issue. In addition to this, it had to be intriguing enough to keep me passionate for several years, as well as closely match my strong commitment to feminism. Suddenly, a forgotten piece of memory returned.

I recalled that the main reason behind my choice to study Sociology had been the need to understand why and how the (post-)Yugoslav wars in the 1990s could have taken place and turn into an arena for such large-scale (sexual) atrocities, havoc and suffering. I also remembered the May 2003 conference 'Women Recollecting Memories'¹ which had been held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Zagreb feminist group² Center for Women War Victims. The memory evoked the image of me sitting in the audience and deciding to respond to the recurring call to collect and analyse information on the women's and feminist groups in the Yugoslav successor states.

1 For all names of events, groups, governmental bodies etc which are featured in this thesis, I have tried to find an official translation in English. When that search did not bear fruit, I translated the name into English myself. Appendix A contains the original names of the Belgrade and Zagreb groups, listed in the alphabetical order of the English language translations. As far as quotations are concerned, all translations from other languages into English are mine. Even when I also had access to an English translation of a text, unless I found that translation sufficiently accurate, I chose to personally translate the original fragments. I use British English; the text fragments – quotations and names of entities, such as groups – which are in American English were not translated by me, but were either originally written or officially translated into American English. Some quotations from texts in English (organisational documents or published articles and essays) contain typing and language mistakes in the original. I have left them intact, except for occasional insertions of '[sic]'. Finally, I have not translated the titles of documents when referring to them. This means that the documents with an English title in the reference (eg '*Protest against the text published in "Globus"*, 12.12.1992') have been written in English, whereas those with a non-English title (eg '*Klic k razumu*, November 1987') have been written in another language.

2 The frequent usage in Croatia and Serbia of the term 'groups' when referring to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is the reason why I employ this term throughout the dissertation.

Soon after this miraculously forgotten resolution had resurfaced, I conceived the topics of my master's and doctorate research. I would start with an analysis of the development of gender policies, women's organisational efforts and interethnic policies and relations in Yugoslavia (1941–1991), including the establishment of feminist groups in the late 1980s, and proceed with the war-related positionings of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in the 1990s. The product of the latter project is this dissertation.

A first sketch of the research topic

In this thesis, I present the findings of my socio-historical comparative analysis of the positionings – ie discourses and activities – of feminists in Belgrade (Serbia) and Zagreb (Croatia) with regard to the (post-)Yugoslav wars³ and each other between 1991 and 2000. More precisely, I use the overarching term 'positioning' to indicate the stand on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and one another which in the 1990s the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists took in oral and written form, as well as through the practical work which they conducted.⁴ My choice of the term 'positioning' instead of the more common 'position' serves to accentuate that those discourses and activities were not a result of a singular decision or event, but a process in which they were gradually coming into being. Hence the word 'positioning' which contains as it were the present participle '-ing'.

3 There are two reasons why I avoid the construction 'the former Yugoslavia' which after 1991 became the standard designation of the region previously known as the 'Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'. First, the constant use of the adjective 'former' chains, so to speak, the whole region to the irreversible past, unlike the prefix 'post' which indicates an open future. Second, there is not a present-day Yugoslavia to distinguish the socialist Yugoslavia from. The need for such a distinction was in place only between 1992 and 2003, when the official name of the federation of Serbia and Montenegro was 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'. I write 'Yugoslavia' to refer to the federation which existed between 1945 and 1991, whereas for the period from the last couple of months of 1991 onward, I speak of 'the Yugoslav successor states' or 'the post-Yugoslav region'. In addition, I use the adjective '(post-)Yugoslav' for phenomena which came into existence in times of Yugoslavia and continued to exist after its disintegration, such as (post-)Yugoslav feminism. I do not, however, employ 'post-Yugoslav' as an identity marker of individuals. Such usage is present in eg Klaić (1998) and Lukić (2011). Finally, my use of '(post-)Yugoslav' and 'post-Yugoslav' should not be understood as suggesting the existence of a country or another political entity which is called 'post-Yugoslavia'.

4 I thus do not use 'positioning' – as eg Yuval-Davis (1997, 1999) does – to refer to one's epistemological location.

While paying close attention to the (violent) context in which these positionings were embedded, I analyse the maintenance of old and the creation of new positionings, the construction and destruction of bonds of cooperation between and among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, as well as how these feminists asserted themselves as political actors and struggled to obtain legitimacy for their work. I examine their biographies to understand their personal backgrounds and life trajectories and see how they relate to these activists' political choices, and I look at the meanings and designations which the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists gave – in the 1990s and in 2009 or 2010 (at the time of interviewing) – to their own war-related activism⁵ and that of the other feminists. Finally, I explain the differences and similarities between the war-induced reorganisations of the feminist fields in Belgrade and Zagreb by taking the relevant societal and individual parameters into account. Hence the title of my thesis: 'Taking a stand in times of violent societal changes: Belgrade and Zagreb feminists' positionings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991–2000)'.

Research questions and propositions to be investigated

The core question of this research is: *What are the differences and similarities among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists with regard to the development and contents of their positionings towards the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991–2000), and how can these differences and similarities be explained?* I answer the core question by addressing the following sub-questions:

1. What are the differences and similarities between the feminists' war-related positionings in the 1990s? How have the political contexts of Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s influenced these positionings?
2. How did the feminists in each city position themselves in the 1990s towards the feminists in the same and the other city with whom they did (not) share similar views on the (post-)Yugoslav wars? How did they legitimate their positioning at the time? How have the political contexts of Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s influenced these positionings vis-à-vis one another?
3. Which relations can be observed between the feminists' biographies and their war-related positionings? What are the differences and similarities between the feminists with regard to those relations?

⁵ In this research, 'activism' refers to one's work in a feminist group, regardless of whether that work was/is conducted on a fully voluntary basis or for a (small) remuneration.

4. How did the feminists speak about their war-related positionings of the 1990s in 2009 or 2010? Which similarities and differences can be discerned there? How have the political contexts of Croatia and Serbia in 2009 and 2010 influenced these positionings?

The research questions are linked to the following propositions made (often implicitly) in the scholarship on war-related (post-)Yugoslav feminism in the 1990s:

1a. There is an analogy between Belgrade and Zagreb regarding the development and the contents of the feminists' war-related positionings (Benderly, 1997a, 1997b; Korać, 1998, 2003; Jansen, 2005; Stojsavljević, 1995; *Forum*, 1995; for exceptions, see Batinić, 2001; Cockburn, 2007; Knežević, 1994; Žarkov, 2002, 2007).⁶

1b. Only the feminists from one cluster provided assistance to (raped) refugee women (on the self-declared antinationalist feminists: Jansen, 2005; Knežević, 1995, 2003; Korać, 1998, 2003; Borić and Mladineo Desnica, 1996; Stojsavljević, 1995; *VNVA-krant*, May 1994; on the so-called nationalist feminists: Allen, 1996; Nenadic, 1996, 2010; MacKinnon, 2006; Milić, 2002; for more balanced elaborations, see Batinić, 2001; Benderly, 1997a; Borić, 1997; *Forum*, 1995; Helms, 2003a; Lindsey, 2002; Obradović-Dragišić, 2004; *Vrouw & Gezondheidszorg*, March/April 1993; Žarkov, 2002, 2007).

1c. The self-declared antinationalist feminists were the only ones crossing (ethnic) boundaries, while the so-called nationalist feminists were the only ones raising them (Batinić, 2001; *On the Issues*, Summer 1993; Jansen, 2005; Korać, 1998, 2003; Mostov, 1995; Ramet S., 2002; *VNVA-krant*, May 1994; Zajović, 1995).

2. The designations 'antinationalist' ('non-nationalist') and 'nationalist' ('patriotic') objectively and impartially describe the two clusters of Belgrade and Zagreb feminists (Benderly, 1997a; Irvine, 2007; Knežević, 1995, 2003; Korać, 1998, 2003; Obradović-Dragišić, 2004; Stojsavljević, 1995; Žarkov, 2007; for an exception, see Žarkov, 2002).

3. The different war-related positionings in the 1990s caused the first tensions and divisions between the feminists (Batinić, 2001; Korać, 1998, 2003; Stojsavljević, 1995; for exceptions, see *On the Issues*, Summer 1993; Benderly 1997b; Žarkov, 2002, 2007).

6 The number of exceptions which I present for each proposition might give the impression that these propositions do not reflect a strong majority view in the academic field. However, the listed exceptional contributions usually do not contain more than a couple of sentences – and often even less than that – in favour of the more balanced view. Therefore they remain exceptions, while sources supporting the propositions remain the rule.

The data which I have obtained through this research show that the above propositions need to be partially rejected. Consequently, in this dissertation the following findings will be elaborated:

1. Next to the similarities, there are significant differences between Belgrade and Zagreb regarding the development and the contents of the feminists' war-related positionings. Nonetheless, in both cities there were self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists, and activists from both clusters crossed and raised boundaries as well as provided assistance to (raped) refugee women.

2. The designations 'nationalist' and 'patriotic' were ascribed to some feminists by the self-declared antinationalist or non-nationalist feminists and their supporters. While partially based in factual positionings, these designations were at the same time a significant component of the ongoing struggle for legitimacy in which the feminists were involved.

3. The different war-related positionings were not necessarily the first and the only factor dividing the feminists in the 1990s. In some cases, those differences built upon previously experienced antagonisms, such as those regarding the activists' dissimilar societal status or the struggles over the right form of feminist engagement.

Terminological choices

Belgrade and Zagreb instead of Serbia and Croatia

I do not speak of 'feminists/groups from Croatia and Serbia', nor of 'Croatian and Serbian feminists/groups', but of 'Zagreb and Belgrade feminists/groups'. Due to my pre-fieldwork knowledge on the geography of (post-)Yugoslav feminism, I was aware that for the study of the influence of the (post-)Yugoslav wars on the feminists who had been already organised in Croatia and Serbia in the late 1980s or at the turn of the decade, it would suffice to interview those who had been active in each republic's capital.

However, my treatment of Belgrade and Zagreb feminism as synonymous with Serbian and Croatian feminism was objected to by some Zagreb feminists with whom I spoke during the first phase of the fieldwork. According to them, since I was also interested in Croatian and Serbian feminism of the second half of the 1990s, I could not limit my inquiry to the capitals and thereby ignore the feminists who had become active later in that decade. In light of this new insight, and in order to be clearer about my concrete research interest in quite a specific group of feminists, I decided to speak of 'Belgrade and Zagreb feminist activists/groups'. By this explicit

articulation of the narrow scope of my research, I follow Donna Haraway (1988:589) who has argued ‘for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims.’

Another reason why I do not refer to those feminists as ‘Croatian’ and ‘Serbian’ is because saying that one is ‘Croatian’ or ‘Serbian’ would be understood in the Yugoslav successor states as indicating one’s ethnicity, not one’s geographical position. Although there is some degree of correspondence between being a Belgrade feminist and being of Serb ethnicity, as well as between being a Zagreb feminist and of Croat ethnicity, an explicit assignment of ethnic origin is not something all of my respondents appreciate. This is due to the laden character of the ethnic identifications (including the non-ethnic one ‘Yugoslav’), the (markedly) mixed ethnic origin of some respondents, and/or some feminists’ decision to avoid the identification with an ethnic collective as much as possible. I address this in more detail in Chapter 5.

Wars instead of ethnic wars

I refrain from referring to the war violence in the (post-)Yugoslav region as ‘ethnic’. Although the term ‘ethnic war(s)’ is commonly used in this context both in and outside academia, I avoid it due to its association with the primordial and essentialising understanding of those wars which has been advocated by eg Kaplan (1993) and Owen (1995). According to their conceptualisation, the (post-)Yugoslav wars have been fought because of *longue durée* ethnic differences and grievances which were both ‘endemic’ (Kaldor, 2006) to the region and inherently accompanied by interethnic hatreds. Shortly suppressed by Yugoslavia’s top-down state-building communist ideology, those hatreds exploded once again when this ideology lost its monopoly.⁷

By opposing this perception of the (post-)Yugoslav wars, I do not by any means intend to imply that people were not raped or killed during these wars because of being seen as belonging to an ethnic group which was considered to be the enemy.

7 This view of the (post-)Yugoslav wars cannot accommodate the numerous instances of solidarity when people from one ethnic group, despite the demise of socialism, helped people of another ethnic group, sometimes risking their own lives and the lives of their families (see Broz, 2005; *I bi svjetlost*, 2007; Tokača, 2010). As Dević (1997a) points out, such conceptualisations do not offer space either for the antiwar initiatives which mobilised people across ethnic boundaries. This also goes for the feminist groups which are addressed in this research. Lastly, the idea of unceasing interethnic hatreds ignores the fact that the programme of creating Yugoslavia has existed since the 19th century and that the pre-World War II predecessor state of socialist Yugoslavia (see Chapter 3) was created in 1918 at the joint initiative of the Serb, Croat and Slovene political elites (Đokić, 2010).

The dreadful examples of war crimes in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo,⁸ committed by all warring sides, albeit to a different extent, do not allow one to ignore the ethnic component of these wars.⁹ I do argue, however – together with Gagnon (2004), Iveković I. (2000), Kaldor (2006) and Žarkov (2007) – that the discourse of ethnic differences and grievances was revived and manipulated by some politicians, military leaders, intellectuals and the media in their struggle for obtaining and maintaining power. In a similar manner, ethnicity often served as a *carte blanche* to kill, rape, torture, steal and destroy, ie legitimated the satisfaction of one's (sadistic) needs for power which would have been much more difficult to realise in a non-war setting. In other words, as Žarkov (2007) argues, ethnicity was not the reason for the wars, but it was definitely their product. The media wars, which were fought simultaneously with the wars on the battlefield, vehemently contributed to the construction of ethnic groups, allies and enemies, and showed that 'both the act of violence and the act of representation were engaged in producing meanings, and the struggle to control these meanings was as fierce as the struggle to control territories' (Žarkov, 2007:7).¹⁰

Naming the wars 'ethnic' also obscures the fact that there were trade and military deals and changing alliances between politicians and (para)militaries within and across the ethnic groups (Andreas, 2008; *E-novine*, 18.11.2010; Gagnon, 2004; *Globus*, 09.06.2010; Mueller, 2000; *Novi list*, 03.10.2009, 26.05.2010; *Pad Krajine*, 2007; Ten Kate, 2007). Such a classification suggests further that multiethnic societies like the Yugoslav one are per se impossible to sustain due to their (presumed) ethnicity-based conflict-inducing differences, and neglects the impact of contingencies, internal

8 In Albanian, this present-day country-in-formation is called 'Kosovë (Kosova)'; whereas 'Kosovo' is its name in the Slavic languages (including Serbian) which are spoken in the post-Yugoslav region. In order to avoid choosing one designation over another and presumably be regarded as taking sides, some authors use the two names interchangeably and others write the name as 'Kosov@'. I use 'Kosovo' because that is at present the official name of the country in English.

9 Ratko Mladić, the military leader of the Bosnian Serb forces who is now on trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), explicitly used the discourse of centuries-long interethnic grievances when he announced the genocide in Srebrenica. In an infamous television appearance on 11 July 1995 he said that the time had come to take revenge on the Turks (a derogatory term for the Bosniaks, ie Bosnian Muslims). The event the Serbs were to take revenge for was the killing of prominent Serbs by the Ottomans at the beginning of the 19th century (the video is available on the internet: <http://youtu.be/edFQTZpf8yM> [16/09/2013]). See more on this phenomenon of 'time fusion and confusion' (Papić, 2002) in Chapter 3.

10 See Kurspahić (2003) and Thompson M. (1999) on the propaganda and the media wars which facilitated the outbreak and continuation of the war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

economic disparities as well as external economic and political factors, such as the role of the international financial institutions or the Fall of the Berlin Wall (I will return to this in Chapter 3). Finally, when referring to the wars in the 1990s I do not use the terms 'civil', 'defensive' or 'aggression' either. As I will show in Chapter 4, these designations mark clear positionings and were thus among the points of contestation between and among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists.

Antinationalist and nationalist

Given that the starting point in this research was the information – obtained from the scholarship on (post-)Yugoslav feminism – that the feminist activists had split into antinationalist (or, less often, non-nationalist) and nationalist (or, less often, patriotic) clusters, these designations¹¹ need to be explained as well. However, since this whole research revolves around these terms' diverse usages, meanings and implications, they will receive attention throughout the whole dissertation. At this point I will, therefore, only focus on the way in which I approached these concepts before and during the fieldwork, as well as on the way in which I use them in this thesis.

One of my first (pre-fieldwork) findings was the realisation that my interest in the feminists who were considered nationalists was repeatedly understood by Western fellow scholars as an inquiry into fascist, religious fundamentalist or right-wing women. That I referred to these activists as 'feminists' was usually bypassed, even though I explained that the women in question had been active feminists before they had allegedly become nationalists.¹² While this experience confirmed Yuval-Davis' claim (1997) that Western feminists usually understood feminism as incompatible with nationalism,¹³ the recurring association with the three above ideological designations

11 For the sake of linguistic diversity, I use the nouns 'names', 'designations' and 'terms' interchangeably, as well as 'naming', 'designating' and 'classifying' when referring to the process of defining the positioning of oneself and the other. I do not use 'labels' and 'labelling' as I want to distance myself from labelling theory (Becker, 1963; Ericson, 1975) due to its focus on social deviance – a term I find too negatively biased to use even for describing a positioning which differed, ie deviated, from the positioning of the speaker. See my discussion of the concepts 'naming' and 'orthodox and heretical' later in this chapter.

12 The eye-opening situation which made me realise this bias was the conversation in which I was asked whether I expected any problems in the interaction with my nationalist respondents due to my shaved head.

13 The interaction between feminism and nationalism and their perceived (in)compatibility have produced a lively scholarly debate (Aguilar, 1998; Cockburn, 1998, 2000a, 2007; Delap et al., 2006; Giles et al., 2003; Hall C., 1993; Iveković R., 1993; Jayawardena, 1986; Krasniqi, 2011; Sarkar and Butalia, 1995; Sharoni, 2001; Stasiulis, 1999; Sunseri, 2000; Ueno, 2004;

left me perplexed, because it did not correspond to the knowledge on the nationalist feminists which I had assembled from scholarship up to then (Batinić, 2001; Benderly, 1997a; Duhaček, 1998; Helms, 1998, 2003a; Kašić, 1994a; Knežević, 1997; Korać, 2003; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; Obradović-Dragišić, 2004; Stojšavljević, 1995; Žarkov, 1999, 2002, 2007).

Based on this scholarship, I conceptualised the seemingly nationalist Belgrade and Zagreb feminists as activists who, compared to the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists who called themselves antinationalists, had a stronger attachment to the respectively Serb and Croat ethnic collective and/or the state in which they lived: Serbia and Croatia, respectively. There were no Zagreb feminists who were seen as Serb nationalists, just as no Belgrade feminists were considered Croat nationalists. The scholarship further made it clear that the two groupings of feminists differed in their interpretations of the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia,¹⁴ and the (sexual) perpetrators and victims in them. Still, none of the above authors had ever mentioned any statement or activity by a nationalist feminist (eg antiabortion advocacy or glorification of motherhood as the primary duty of women) which would point to allegiance to a fascist, religious fundamentalist, right-wing or other conservative ideology.¹⁵ Finally, unlike the feminists whose self-designation was ‘antinationalist’ (‘non-nationalist’), the supposedly nationalist (or patriotic) feminists did not publicly declare themselves as such, but were called so by the other feminists – an issue I will return to in Chapters 2, 4 and 6.

In view of these initial findings, I decided not to predefine the terms ‘antinationalist’, ‘non-nationalist’, ‘nationalist’ and ‘patriotic’ before the fieldwork. Instead, I chose to keep them as open concepts whose meaning I would extract later from the data collected from the interviews and the archival search. In practice, this meant that in approaching the potential respondents I would use those designations in

Ward, 1983; West, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Žarkov, 2006). I find it, nevertheless, crucial not to debate the general (in)compatibility of feminism and nationalism or aim at creating a metatheory on feminism and nationalism since the two ideologies can be conceptualised and practiced differently. Hereby I subscribe to Cockburn’s sharp observation: ‘So are nationalism and feminism compatible? It depends of course on what *kind* of nationalism and what *kind* of feminism you are talking about – for both of them are plural movements’ (1998:41, emphasis in the original).

14 I did not have at that time any information on the positionings on the war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999.

15 My post-fieldwork analysis of the organisational documents of the feminist groups and the information in the media, as well as the interview narratives on one’s religious affiliation and motivation for feminism, have unquestionably confirmed the absence of such linkages (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

a manner that was as neutral and open as possible, and apply the same strategy during both the formulation of the interview questions and the interview itself.

As the analysis of the feminists' positionings in Chapters 4 and 6 shows, my research partially confirms the insight on the designations which I had gained from the study of previous scholarship. The use of 'antinationalist' ('non-nationalist') and 'nationalist' ('patriotic') proved to be partially justified. These terms did indicate – although not capture fully – the larger or smaller distances between the feminists' positionings and those present in the official politics of Croatia and Serbia. In light of this research finding and the prevalence of the terms 'antinationalist' and 'nationalist' in the literature (see Chapter 2), I decided to also employ these two names.

Nevertheless, in order to attend to the thus far unreported (power) differences in naming between the antinationalist and nationalist feminists (ie the ascription of designations to the latter by the former) and the equally absent scholarly attention to this process (see Chapter 2), I chose to use these terms preceded by the adjectives 'self-declared' and 'so-called', respectively. Therefore, starting from the next section and throughout the rest of this dissertation I speak of 'self-declared antinationalist feminists' and 'so-called nationalist feminists'. This addition also creates some free semantic space for adding the necessary nuances to the designations 'antinationalist' and 'nationalist' which they, being already too impregnated with meaning, do not leave otherwise.

Feminism

The final term in need of immediate explanation is 'feminism', due to its ambiguous use in the scholarship on (post-)Yugoslav women's activism. The designation 'feminist' is sometimes applied to the activists and groups which explicitly declare themselves so (Helms, 1998, 2003a; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993; Stojšavljević, 1995; Žarkov, 2002, 2007), while at other times the designations 'women's' and 'feminist' are used interchangeably as if they were synonyms (Batinić, 2001; Blagojević, 1998a; Jansen, 2005; Korać, 1998, 2003; Milić, 2002; Pavlović, 1999). There are also texts in which the generic 'women's' broadly denotes everybody, including the activists and groups which do describe themselves as feminist (Borić, 1997; Helms, 2003b; Irvine, 2007; Mostov, 1995; Kesić, 2002a). Lastly, 'women's' can also be employed to distinguish the activists or groups which do not declare themselves feminist (Helms, 2003a; Knežević, 1994, 2004).

In my view, this diversity of usages has primarily to do with the negative connotations which are often attached to feminism in the post-Yugoslav societies,

sometimes also by the women's activists themselves. These connotations suggest that feminists are: aggressive, disciplining, extreme/radical, lesbian, men-unfriendly or gender separatist (Barilar, 2000; Cockburn, 2001; Drakulić Sla., 1993; Helms, 2003a, 2003b; Milić, 2002, 2004; Papić, 1992; Renne, 1997a; Snitow, 1994). In consequence of these possible connotations, insecurity exists as to whether the addressed groups or activists should be referred to as 'feminist'. On the other hand, 'women's' (groups or activists), besides correctly denoting the gender of (the majority of) the activists, is a broad enough and, thus, safer description. This issue does not pose a problem in my research, though. As the succeeding chapters will make it clear, the activists whose work I analyse have usually – if not always – publicly used the designation 'feminist' to refer to themselves and/or their groups. In line with this, in the rest of the thesis I use the term 'feminist', with the exception of the instances when I single out somebody's use of the term 'women's' due to its significance for the argument in question.

There is, however, one more use of the term 'feminist' which differs from those stated above. It concerns the cases when the application of this term and the line of reasoning in which it is used convey an implicit classification of 'feminists' and 'non-feminists', whereby the self-asserted feminist affiliation of the latter is denied. For example, after speaking about the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups in general, Borić and Mladineo Desnica (1996) only described the positioning of the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. In a similar manner, MacKinnon (1993:83) illustrated her statement on the 'feminists in Zagreb' by mentioning only so-called nationalist feminist groups. In both examples the feminists with a different positioning, by being silently omitted from the illustrations, become implicitly classified as 'non-feminist'. Such use of the term 'feminist' only for activists or positionings the author endorses is also to be found in eg Jansen (2005), Kesić (2002a), Mostov (1995), *off our backs* (November 1991) and Slapšak (2008), and – as I explained in the preceding paragraph – differs from the usage employed in this dissertation.

Elaboration of the research topic

My analysis is particularly concerned with exploring the split between self-declared antinationalist (or non-nationalist) and so-called nationalist (or patriotic) feminists which took place after the outbreak of war violence¹⁶ and was significantly more

16 The watershed moment in the history of feminism in Belgrade and Zagreb was the outburst of war violence in the early 1990s, not the outburst of nationalism in the late 1980s. That is why I speak of 'war-related' instead of 'nationalism-related' conflicts, positionings,

pronounced in Zagreb than in Belgrade. This schism, which manifested, inter alia, in different definitions of the wartime (sexual) perpetrators and victims, can be discerned from both academic and non-academic texts, some of which address only the situation in one of the cities (Batinić, 2001; Benderly, 1997a, 1997b; Bilić, 2011a; Borić, 1997; *die tageszeitung*, 05.11.1992; *Forum*, 1995; Hughes, Mršević and Mladenović, 1995; Irvine, 2007; Jansen, 2005; Kašić, 1994a, 2006; Knežević, 1994, 1995, 2004; Korać, 1998, 2003; Mladenović and Litričin, 1993; Obradović-Dragišić, 2004; Pavlović, 1999; *Village Voice*, 13.07.1993; Zaharijević, 2007; Žarkov, 1999, 2002, 2007).

Instead of subscribing to the often presented simplified dichotomous portrayal, I show that none of the two feminist clusters should be perceived as completely different from the other cluster in the same city or as fully resembling the corresponding cluster in the other city. My questioning of the black and white portrayal of the opposition between the so-called nationalist and the self-declared antinationalist feminists has created space for discovering several necessary nuances. Such are eg the tensions between the Belgrade and Zagreb antinationalist feminists which persisted despite these feminists' sincere commitment towards maintaining the pre-war cooperation and gender- instead of ethnicity-based solidarity.

Although I speak of four feminist clusters – two self-declared antinationalist and two so-called nationalist – the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminist cluster differs from the other three. This specificity calls for a note of caution. Despite the existence of shared war-related positionings among the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists and the academic cooperation between some of them on eg book projects, they have never formed one joint group and/or come out in public with a common 'we' positioning. Consequently, during the interviews each of them expressed her positioning using the 'I' form. In this sense, to speak of the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists as a cluster means to impose a degree of affiliation which is greater than that which has actually existed. One could even see this cluster as a 'so-called cluster'. Nevertheless, such a semi-artificial aggregation was necessary for analytical purposes.

Another note of caution concerns the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists. As I will show in Chapter 4, the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 led to a differentiation among them with regard to the issue of Serb responsibility for and victimisation by the war violence. Some remained underlining the Serb responsibility for the victimisation of non-Serbs, while others accentuated the Serb victimisation which resulted from the actions of NATO and the military forces

dynamics etc. Nevertheless, given that nationalism was an intrinsic part of the (post-) Yugoslav wars, the construction 'war-related' should be understood as including the assignment 'nationalism-related'.

of the Kosovar Albanians. The latter feminists' positioning overlapped with that of the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists. For the sake of not complicating the analysis further, I decided to maintain the division among the Belgrade feminists which had come into existence during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, and speak of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminists as a single cluster. Had my research been concerned only with the war violence in 1999, I would not have made such a simplifying choice.

In this dissertation I move beyond the sometimes, though often implicitly, present normative classification of good vs bad feminists (Borić, 1997; Fischer E., 1993; Knežević, 1994; MacKinnon, 2006; Milić, 2002; Nenadic, 1996, 2010; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; Zajović, 1995) – a classification which becomes additionally laden in a war context. Without ignoring the differences in positionings and their corresponding consequences (such as the degree of risk taken by the activists), I demonstrate that the feminists whose war-related positionings stood closer to those of the Croatian or the Serbian authorities have also conducted important work on improving the position of (refugee) women. This is particularly significant since the work and the voices of the Belgrade and Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists are largely absent from the relevant scholarship. By giving space to these feminists, I express my agreement with Saba Mahmood (2001:225) who has argued that

in order for us to be able to judge, in a morally and politically informed way, even those practices we consider objectionable, it is important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important.¹⁷

However, the space which I create for the voices of the so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists is not free from interventions, as is often the case in publications which present the oral histories of particular groups of people.¹⁸

17 Dubravka Žarkov (2000:177) has criticised in a similar manner the Yugoslav feminists' absence of analyses of the protests of the Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Montenegrin women in the autumn of 1987, which followed a statement of the Kosovar Albanian politician Fadil Hoxha (see Chapter 3): 'As if it is absolutely insignificant for feminist political and theoretical struggles to learn what moves thousands of women who were otherwise far from any political activism into political actions, what meanings these actions have for them, and what these actions tell us about these women's ideas of the reality in which they live. We may well conclude that these actions are nationalist, or racist, or right wing. But does that mean that they are not worth analysing?'

18 For example, Dobrović and Bosanac (2007) on the gay and lesbian people in Croatia, Leydesdorff (2008) on the female survivors of the Srebrenica genocide, and Spariousu and Savić Sv. (2011) on the Romanian minority women in Vojvodina (Serbia).

In my research, the feminists' voices are juxtaposed, contextualised, crosschecked with written sources, interpreted and theorised. By these means I seek to situate and bring to a higher level of abstraction the things said and done, thereby moving away from the level of *ad hominem* criticisms and arbitrary classifications where the discussion is often situated in the narratives of my respondents.¹⁹

Inspired by Mills (1978), I strive to link the biographical and the structural/historical, ie – to borrow from the famous Second Wave feminist slogan – the personal and the political.²⁰ By unpacking and linking contextual layers and individuals' backgrounds and utterances, I want to create a more complex portrayal of the interconnectedness of the personal and the structural in the lives of the feminist activists. Despite these feminists' otherwise good comprehension of the above analogy between the personal and the political, an understanding of this interconnectedness is not always present in their narratives.²¹

I do not suggest, however, that my respondents are incapable of arriving at such an understanding by themselves, as Mills (1978:10) has somewhat pretentiously suggested about 'ordinary men [sic]': 'They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man [sic] and society, of biography and history, of self and world'. Nevertheless, when it comes to executing a research project as this one and putting these activists' practice into theory (Mol et al., 2010), I am aware that my

19 It occurred frequently during the interviews that the respondent would criticise a feminist as if she were a free agent, fully unencumbered by contextual constraints and possibilities. An example of this is the objection that somebody had abandoned her activist work and become a professional feminist, meaning that she had exchanged her (largely) voluntary engagement for a steadier employment in eg a state body on gender equality. In this attempt to delegitimise the other feminist – and legitimise oneself as a true, ie disinterested feminist – the accent is put on the other feminist's apparent lack of integrity due to the pursuit of a personal instead of the collective gain. No attention is given to the possible situational factors, such as the inability of the feminist in question to continue being an unpaid activist (which had been hitherto possible due to her employment elsewhere or living with her parents) and the unavailability of other employment opportunities for working on gender equality. This criticism neither allows for the possibility that the other feminist might consider the work in a state institution a more efficient way to bring about the desired societal change. Building upon Pierre Bourdieu, I see those accusations of a hidden agenda or a betrayal of feminism as examples of misrecognition which point to the largely unconscious struggle for symbolic capital among the feminists. I will return to this later in this chapter, in my presentation of the analytical framework.

20 The use of 'political' in this slogan should be understood 'in the broad sense of the word as having to do with power relationships, not the narrow sense of electoral politics' (Hanisch, 2006: no pagination).

21 Blagojević (1998b:35) has observed the same in her analysis of the Belgrade women's groups in the 1990s: 'It is interesting that the activists themselves perceive the conflicts foremostly as "personal disagreements"'.

(academic) location has been more strongly privileged than those of my respondents (Haraway, 1988; Rich, 1985). The employment at the University of Amsterdam has provided me with resources – information, money and time – and a physical distance from the post-Yugoslav region which markedly benefitted the production of such complex knowledge.

This scholarly endeavour will, hopefully, enable me to offer something in return to the women who participated in it by giving me an interview and otherwise, given that I advance my career based on carrying out an analysis of the work which they have conducted and the insights which they have developed. By this intended reciprocity – which will, inter alia, physically manifest in the fact that the respondents will receive a copy of this dissertation – I also aim to contribute towards the discontinuation of the unidirectional knowledge transfer whereby local activists and scholars do not get any feedback from the researchers at Western universities whose research subjects they have been.²²

I will be glad if my contribution to the historiography of (post-)Yugoslav feminism will be understood as following the direction which Gérard Noiriel (2007:691) has proposed for the French historians, ie that it will ‘enrich the collective memory [and] make it more critical by integrating in it the knowledge which has not been produced for rehabilitating or denouncing, but rather for explaining and understanding’. Furthermore, it is my ambition that this study will also prove beneficial to the younger generations of Belgrade and Zagreb feminist activists, as well as students and scholars of women’s/gender studies,²³ in the sense that it will offer them a deeper insight into the trajectories of their local feminist foremothers and the enormous knowledge which these preceding generations have created. Finally, this research might turn to be inspiring also for scholars whose work is concerned with feminists in other parts of the world where nationalism and/or war violence hold sway. More specifically, I hope that the nationalism- and war-related positionings and experiences of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, including the instances of cooperation and confrontation, will be useful for understanding better the complexity of feminist activism in other divided and fragile societies.

22 Pertinent criticism of this practice was articulated by many respondents. Cf. the related comment by the Belgrade feminist Staša Zajović: ‘We are fed up...with being the research objects. We do not gain anything in that way. We neither restore [our] energy nor does [it] help us reflect upon different ways of work and solidarity, but [it] only exhausts us’ (*Arkzin*, 20.12.1996).

23 The partial overlap between the categories ‘students’ and ‘scholars’ and the category ‘activists’ notwithstanding.

The above elaboration of my research goals and concerns reveals the strong ethical commitment behind my research. This commitment will be, hopefully, visible throughout this thesis, but in particular in the Methodology section later in this chapter and in Chapter 2, wherein I will attend to the biases, inconsistencies and silent places in the relevant scholarship. The 'feminist research ethic' I subscribe to has been aptly outlined by Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True (2008:695):

[It] is a commitment to inquiry about how we inquire. The research ethic involves being attentive to (1) the power of knowledge, and more profoundly, of epistemology...(2) boundaries, marginalization, and silences, (3) relationships and their power differentials, and (4) our own situatedness as researchers. We need to be aware of how our own basket of privileges and experiences conditions our knowledge and research. However, the feminist-informed researcher's commitment to self-reflection is not merely a commitment to reflecting on his [sic] identity as a researcher but rather, to noticing and thinking through silences in epistemology, boundaries, and power dynamics (of the research process itself) from a range of theoretical perspectives.

My decision to compare the war-related feminist activism in Belgrade and Zagreb was informed by empirical, not theoretical considerations, which clearly indicates the inductive nature of this research. To begin with, I was interested in the war-related positionings of the feminists who, besides being active in the 1990s, had already known and cooperated with each other before Yugoslavia's disintegration. That left me with the choice of Belgrade, Ljubljana and/or Zagreb – the only three Yugoslav cities which had witnessed a developed (and to a certain extent similar) feminist activism already in the 1980s. Nevertheless, in light of the great contextual differences between Slovenia, on the one hand, and Croatia and Serbia, on the other, as well as between the work of the Ljubljana feminists and that of the Belgrade and Zagreb ones, I left out Ljubljana from this research.²⁴

24 After Slovenia's early disentanglement from Yugoslavia in late June 1991, followed by a ten-day war on its territory, the newly independent state took a separate course and did not get involved with the war violence in the remaining parts of Yugoslavia (with the exception of selling arms to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia; see Šurc and Zgaga, 2012). Moreover, as my data collection has shown, after Slovenia gained sovereignty, the interaction between the Ljubljana feminists and the Belgrade and Zagreb ones had decreased significantly. Due to Slovenia's separate course and absence of war violence, the agenda of the Ljubljana feminists increasingly started to differ from those of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists. In addition to this, Slovenia's dissimilar context led to exclusion of the Ljubljana feminists from the international (feminist) conferences and meetings on the (post-)Yugoslav wars: since Slovenia did not fall under the specific funding guidelines, there were often no grants

Unlike the situation in Zagreb, where in 1992 the feminists clearly split on the definition of the perpetrators and victims of the (sexual) war violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia,²⁵ such a prominent and tangible cleavage has never taken shape in Belgrade, not even in 1999 when Serbia was targeted by the NATO bombardment and a ground war was waged in Kosovo. This difference between the two cities in terms of the dynamics among the feminists lends itself perfectly to a scholarly analysis, especially since – as I will explain in Chapter 2 – it is so far often not taken into account by scholars on (post-)Yugoslav feminism.

Croatia and Serbia – as the broader contexts of the feminist activism addressed here – display some similarities, as well as significant differences. Some of the commonalities between the two countries are their key roles in the construction, development and disintegration of Yugoslavia (the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular), the revival of ethnic nationalism since the late 1980s, the economic hardship, refugee flows and military mobilisation in the 1990s, as well as the (sexual) war crimes committed by each country's (para)militaries. As Đurić-Kuzmanović et al. (2008:275) have noted, these intense processes led in both countries to exhaustion of the activists and played a role in the conflicts between them:

for the Ljubljana feminists to cover their travel and accommodation costs. This reduced further their interaction with the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists (Dobnikar, 2000; Jalušič, 2002a; interviews with Ljubljana2EXT, Ljubljana1EXT and Zagreb7AN).

- 25 My review of the scholarship, media contributions and organisational documents has revealed that there is no unanimity concerning the geographical indication used for contextualising the war rapes which have happened between 1991 and 1995. Some speak of war rapes in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia and others of war rapes in the former Yugoslavia (while actually referring only to those in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia). Yet others address only Bosnia and Herzegovina, given the much larger prevalence of the war rapes there and/or the greater political and media attention which these rapes have received compared to those in Croatia. I have been unable to detect a difference between the positionings of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists on the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the war rapes in Croatia. I speak therefore of the positioning on the war rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Although in the period which I analyse two more wars took place – in Slovenia (summer 1991) and in Kosovo (1998–1999) – I do not write about war rapes in connection to these two wars. No war rapes were reported during the ten-day Slovenian war. In Kosovo war rapes were reported, but I have not come across even a hint of debate or tension between the post-Yugoslav feminists concerning the character of the war rapes in that war (Farnsworth, 2008; *Priopćenje za javnost*, 02.04.1999; *Statment* [sic] *Regarding Mass Rapes*, 29.04.1999; Zajović, 1999a; *Zarez*, 09.07.1999). It is also important to keep in mind that the feminist debates have focused on the war rapes of women committed by men and not on the war rapes of men by men. Such rapes have also taken place, although in far fewer numbers than the rapes of women (on the rapes of men see *Bassiouni report*, May 1994; Jones, 1994; Vranić, 1996; Žarkov, 1997, 2007).

[T]he workload assumed by these...groups in aiding war victims, in the absence of state assistance, or directly against the state interventions (as the states were busy waging war and justifying violence committed by their own forces) and the complex conditions in which they worked – war, insecurity, economic deprivation, political isolation, or over-exposure –...contributed to tensions within the groups.

These parallels notwithstanding, the war violence taking place on the territory of Croatia (1991–1995) preceded the war violence in Serbia (1998–1999), and whereas Serbia had a major responsibility for the attacks and atrocities on the territory of Croatia, the opposite was not the case.²⁶ The war in Serbia consisted of two segments, none of which involved Croatia. The first segment was the NATO bombardment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the war between the NATO air forces and the air defence of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the second segment (the ground war in Kosovo), the police, army and paramilitary forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ethnically cleansed the Kosovar Albanian civilian population and clashed with its military formations.

The dissimilarities between the war violence in Croatia and Serbia have, on the one hand, been conducive to unexpected similarities between some of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists' positionings on the war in Croatia (and Bosnia and Herzegovina). Roughly speaking, the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists regarded the Serbs as the only perpetrators, and the Croats (and Bosniaks, ie Bosnian Muslims²⁷) as the only victims. An analogous resemblance existed between the Belgrade so-called nationalist and the Zagreb self-

26 I thank Dubravka Žarkov for alerting me early in the research process to this difference between Croatia and Serbia and its consequences for the divergent development of the feminists' positionings in each country.

27 'Bosniak(s)' is the present-day official English translation of 'Bošnjak' (singular) and 'Bošnjaci' (plural) – the official Bosnian and Herzegovinian designations for the Bosnian Muslims since 1993. Before that, and throughout the existence of Yugoslavia, the Bosnian Muslim population was differently categorised in the censuses: 'Undeclared Muslims (of Yugoslav origin)', 'Muslims (as ethnic, not religious group)' and 'Muslims (as a nation)'. The last term, created in 1971, was a very significant one since it signalled the first time that the Muslims were recognised as the third constitutive nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, next to the Croats and the Serbs who already held that status (Mrđen, 2002; see also Helms, 2003a). In the present-day everyday language and unofficial settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the names 'Muslim' and 'Bosniak' are often used interchangeably, also by people who self-identify with this ethnic group. There are also those who could be classified as 'Bosniaks' by virtue of their ethnic background, but refuse this designation as too intertwined with Bosniak nationalism. In this dissertation I use the official designation 'Bosniak(s)'.

declared antinationalist feminists. Both clusters evoked the shared responsibility of all involved parties for the war violence. On the other hand, Croatia's non-involvement in the later war in Serbia led to a certain distancing between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists and their positionings. First, there were less extensive interactions during that period between the feminists from the two cities. Second, the positionings of the Belgrade feminists regarding that war did not at all concern Croatia and the Zagreb feminists, while the Zagreb feminists did not produce many public statements regarding Serbia and the Belgrade feminists.

Croatia and Serbia additionally differed in the degree to which they were subjected to international sanctions. Starting from 31 May 1992 and throughout the 1990s, Serbia was hit by numerous cultural, economic and political sanctions levied by the European Union, the United Nations and the United States of America,²⁸ while Croatia 'only' underwent the United Nations embargo on delivery of arms and military equipment to all (post-)Yugoslav republics/countries. Finally, the peaceful reintegration in January 1998 of the last Croatian territory that had been held by Serbs during the war meant a closure of the issue of contested territories between Croatia and Serbia. In Serbia, however, a definite closure is yet to be negotiated. Albeit in practice Kosovo has not been under Serbia's jurisdiction since June 1999 (with the exception of the Serb regions in Northern Kosovo), Serbia still contests Kosovo's separate status. In this sense, the designation 'post-war society' applies better to Croatia than to Serbia, which is also visible in the discourses one can find in each country's political arena.

To get a better idea about the contexts in which the analysed feminists' positionings and dynamics have come about, it is further necessary to recall the constitutive power of violence, ie the power of violence to construct (constitute) new contexts and meanings by altering previous ones. According to Gail Mason (2006:174), violence

is a spectacle. Not because it is simply something that we observe but, more fundamentally, because it is a mechanism through which we observe and define other things. Violence has the capacity to shape the ways that we see, and thereby come to know, these things. In other words, violence is more than a practice that acts upon the bodies of individual subjects to inflict harm and injury. It is, metaphorically speaking, also a way of looking at these subjects.

28 The last sanctions against Serbia, ie the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, were lifted on 19 January 2001 (Garfield, 2001).

On a physical level, this constitutive power was manifested in the killed and harmed living beings, destroyed buildings and transportation and communication infrastructure, as well as in the creation of no-go areas covered with land mines and new borders whose crossing was difficult and dangerous. In addition to these physical manifestations, as Mattijs van de Port (2008) asserts, the whole hitherto self-evident symbolic order in the society was turned upside down. The destabilisation or even break-up of all stable structures brought the unsettling understanding that what one has believed to be true is nothing but a malleable human-made construction.²⁹ Carolyn Nordstrom (1992:261) has warned that this destruction of social order and meaning can sometimes exert an even greater impact on individuals and societies than the annihilation of people and material property:

Maimed bodies and ruined villages are obvious casualties of dirty wars. Maimed culture – including crucial frameworks of knowledge – and ruined social institutions are not as visible, but they are equally powerful realities and their destruction may have a much more enduring and serious impact than the more obvious gruesome casualties of war.

In my view, the transformations which the war violence constituted at the symbolic level can be organised in a quadripartite classification. The first category contains changes in the availability or the appropriateness of the possible positionings. Certain positionings (eg one's ethnicity-based victimisation by the war violence) were granted a wider space in the political arena and the media, whereas the space for other positionings (such as one's ethnicity-based responsibility for the violence) was narrowed down. Moreover, there was a domination of polarised either/or positionings, while middle path and/or neither/nor positionings were, if not eliminated, then heavily marginalised. The second category entails changes in the meaning of topographic objects. Pre-war hotels, inns, schools, farms and factories were stripped of their peace-time function and turned into (rape) prison camps, military quarters and refugee settlements, whereas parks and fields became graveyards.

29 Cf Papić (2002:129): 'The external destruction of a social/cultural identity system in war is the most brutal form of deconstruction, but life under the processes of malign internal mutations is, perhaps, equally disastrous because it systematically diminishes and humiliates the basic human values of decency, honesty, tolerance and individual morality; it even violates more basic assumptions, such as the concept of time (past, present and future), personal identity, or the simple Ten Commandments (love thy neighbour, thou shalt not kill, etc.).'

Linguistic alterations form the third category. Some words (eg Yugoslav, citizenship, people's army, socialism, allies and enemies, loyal and disloyal, danger, rights and grievances) were given new meaning. In Croatia, the Cyrillic alphabet was declared as belonging uniquely to the inimical ethnic group (the Serbs) and subsequently banned. The words which were proclaimed as originally Serb came to be replaced with Croat archaisms or newly created words. In Serbia, such changes were less radical and rapid since the country was not subjected to the same accelerated process of differentiation as was the case with the newly independent, ie newly establishing, Croatia. The Latin alphabet remained in use, but priority was increasingly given to the use of the Cyrillic one. The last, fourth, category of changes are the processes of political mobilisation of some people and demobilisation of others, as well as creation and destruction of personal relationships and political alliances.

In the decade (1991–2000) addressed in this research, fast evolving social changes took place in Croatia and Serbia. They were a consequence of nationalism, the war violence, the disintegration of the federative Yugoslav state into smaller polities, and the transition from a single-party socialist into a multi-party capitalist system. Although the fieldwork for this study was conducted in 2008, 2009 and 2010, I chose to take 2000 as the final year of my exploration for three reasons. First, I wanted to focus only on the decade which in Croatia and Serbia is rightly regarded as a decade of war violence and economic and political hardship. The term 'devedesete' (the 1990s) is repeatedly found in the Croatian and Serbian media not only in connection to concrete events from that historical period, but also as a metaphor for a dark period which hangs above these two countries as the sword of Damocles.³⁰ Second, both Croatia and Serbia experienced great political changes in 2000. The political parties of Franjo Tuđman (the president of Croatia) and Slobodan Milošević (the president of Serbia), which were in power throughout the 1990s, lost the parliamentary elections in, respectively, January and December of that year. These internal political changes, as well as the preceding end of the war violence, were followed by changes in the policies of the foreign funding agencies – both the (supra)national and the more independent ones. The largely informal emergency donations to the feminist groups which had been characteristic for the militarised 1990s gave way to official bureaucratic grant

30 For example, 'Povratak devedesetih' ('The Return of the Nineties') in the Croatian biweekly *Zarez* (14.07.2006), 'Ustašluci na stadionima – odjek devedesetih' ('Ustasha-like behaviour at the stadiums – an echo of the Nineties') in the Croatian daily *Novi list* (20.10.2008), 'Jelašić: Neće se ponoviti 90-e' ('Jelašić: The '90s will not recur') on the website of the Serbian radio and TV station *B92* (22.11.2008) and 'Čanak: Srbija počinje da liči na Srbiju iz devedesetih' ('Čanak: Serbia starts to resemble the Serbia from the Nineties') on the website of the Serbian news agency *Beta* (24.01.2012). See also Jansen (2005).

procedures. This led to organisational changes in these groups, such as the creation of more formal hierarchical structures and less fluid membership. In the 2000s the feminist fields in Croatia and Serbia additionally changed with the establishment of different gender equality bodies at state and municipality level which subsequently employed some of the feminist activists (Bagić, 2004; Bilić, 2011b; Kesić, 2007; Potkonjak et al., 2008).

Finally, the choice for a shorter time span and a more detailed exploration – as opposed to obtaining less detailed data to compare two quite different decades (the 1990s and the 2000s) – was also prompted by the many silent and laden places regarding the war-related feminist activism in Belgrade and Zagreb. Their existence required extensive interviews and a repetitive thorough search for clues in organisational documents, (non-)academic texts and video recordings. This type of data collection would have been impossible to conduct in a satisfactory manner in the earmarked fieldwork time, had the analysed period extended over two decades.

Analytical framework

My analysis of the differences and similarities among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists with regard to the development and contents of their positionings towards the (post-)Yugoslav wars and each other (1991–2000) is primarily based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, ie his concepts of agents, capital, field, habitus, misrecognition, naming, and orthodoxy and heterodoxy (heresy). This analytical framework is supplemented by the concepts of memory and myth.

Bourdieu (1986, 1990, 1991, 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Grenfell, 2008; Swartz, 1996, 1997) defines a field as a network or a social arena whose occupants constantly compete with one another for the scarce and unevenly distributed resources which are recognised as legitimate sources of power within that particular field. Put differently, the agents struggle for legitimacy, ie ‘for the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1991:239). Each agent wants her/his definition of the situation (eg positioning, rules or worldview) to be the one which will be widely recognised and accepted in the concrete field as the only legitimate one. The resources and the actions of an agent in the field can be properly understood only when compared with (or in relation to) the resources and the actions of the other inhabitants. In other words, everybody’s status within the field is determined by both her/his own position and the position of the other occupants in the diverse hierarchical systems which are operational in that field.

Differentiated societies consist of many fields which can – but do not necessarily – exist quite independently (autonomously) from each other: economic field, intellectual field, political field, feminist field, media field, religious field, artistic field, etc. Consequently, one's status in one field can be quite unlike one's status in another. This is due to the separate conceptualisations of the sources of power, ie the dissimilar understandings of what represents a valid source of power, which usually hold sway in different fields.

Bourdieu refers to the aforementioned scarce sources of power as 'capital'. In addition to the three basic types of capital – cultural, economic and social – there can be many other types of capital, all of which can be operationalised to be empirically measured. Each field is characterised by one type of capital which possesses the greatest value in that specific field. That value can only be determined in relation to the concrete field in question because in another field the same capital can have much less to no value at all. One's appreciation of the value of the particular capital and the awareness of the importance of securing it do not occur on a fully conscious level. They are a part of the habitus or the set of dispositions which the agent internalises during the process of socialisation within the specific field and subsequently applies rather unconsciously to her or his daily practices.

Cultural capital includes the possession of proper educational qualifications and the right criteria for detecting the appropriate cultural artefacts, manners, vocabulary, accent, food, clothes, hobbies etc, as well as factual ownership of such precious items. Economic capital simply consists of one's financial assets, whereas social capital points to one's network: one's connection to people who are seen as holders of valuable capital and who can, if asked, give access to some of their capital (ie power) to the one who asks. Each type of capital is instrumental in creating power hierarchies, ie it serves to mark differences and similarities between the occupants of the field. The different types of capital can not only be acquired, inherited, transferred, exchanged, increased and decreased, but also partially converted into one another. Bourdieu (1986:243, italics in the original) has explained the latter process as follows:

[E]conomic capital...is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights;... cultural capital...is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and...social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility.

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Bourdieu defined symbolic capital as well. That is cultural, economic, social or another type of capital which has been unconsciously given legitimacy, ie has been recognised as a valuable or appropriate source of power in that field. Symbolic capital can be used to secure more of another type of capital, which can consequently further increase one's legitimacy within the field.³¹ The mobilisation of symbolic capital plays a significant role in the already mentioned struggles between the field occupants over the legitimate definition of the situation:

Objective power relations tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic power relations. In the symbolic struggle for the production of common sense or, more precisely, for a monopoly over legitimate naming, agents put into action the symbolic capital that they have acquired in previous struggles and which can be juridically guaranteed. In this way, titles of nobility, like educational qualifications, represent real titles of symbolic property which give one a right to the profits of recognition (Bourdieu, 1990:135).

The names which the agents employ to describe their own positioning and that of their opponents serve to situate a positioning in the field, as well as legitimise or delegitimise it. There are no impartial or neutral designations, not only because 'nothing classifies somebody more than the way he or she classifies' (Bourdieu, 1990:132), but also because

[t]he categories of perception, the systems of classification, that is, essentially, the words, the names which construct social reality as much as they express it, are the crucial stakes of political struggle, which is a struggle to impose the legitimate principle of vision and division (Bourdieu, 1990:134; see also Haraway, 1988).

On another level and applied to this research, considering the profound and violent societal changes which characterised their context, the designations which the occupants of the feminist field used for themselves and for the feminists with opposing views also served as a coping mechanism (Janoff-Bulman and Hanson Frieze, 1983). In other words, the names created some order in the physical, psychological and

31 The conversion of symbolic into economic capital (and vice versa) is an important issue to consider for understanding the dynamics between the feminists, given that their activities and at least some of their income in the 1990s depended almost exclusively on financial support from abroad. Nevertheless, this issue lies outside the scope of this research. Not only is the money flow in the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups a topic large enough to qualify for a separate dissertation research project, but it is also a delicate one given the amount of informal donations. Being aware of the already great sensitivity of my primary research interest, I discarded from the start the idea of including this topic as well.

discursive insecurity caused by the proximity of war violence and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, as well as by the hard to grasp sudden differences in positioning between some of the hitherto fellow feminists and friends. Wherever shared affiliation was being disbanded, the classifying and naming made it easier to cope with one's dissident choices and strengthened the ties between the feminists with a same or very similar positioning.

According to Bourdieu, the struggle for legitimacy within a field can be described as a contest

between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out competition...Those who in a determinate state of the power relations, more or less completely monopolize the specific capital, the basis of the specific power or authority characteristic of a field, are inclined to conservation strategies – those which...tend to defend *orthodoxy* – whereas those least endowed with capital (who are often also the newcomers, and therefore generally the youngest) are inclined towards subversion strategies, the strategies of *heresy* (1993:72,73, italics in the original).

Hipscher (2007) has conceptualised this struggle quite similarly to Bourdieu, although without referring to him. The two groups which she analysed showed an uncommon combination of positionings: the first united Catholicism and a pro-choice positioning, and the second articulated a feminist pro-life positioning. She called these groups 'heretical social movement organisations' and explained why such an organisation was heretical:

[It] identifies with an identity community yet articulates issue positions and pursues goals contrary to the community's presumed core issue positions. I say 'presumed,' as I recognize that identity community members may have multiple, contradictory interests, and goals. Nevertheless, the identity community as a whole is associated with particular issue positions because dominant organizations and leaders from the community espouse and enforce them (Hipscher, 2007:242).

Based on my empirical findings and building upon these two authors, I consider the initial positioning on violence of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, wherein gender had primacy over ethnicity (ie wherein men, regardless of ethnicity, were seen as perpetrators, while women, regardless of ethnicity, were perceived as victims), as the established or orthodox positioning within the feminist field in each city. This indication of the field in question is very important. The concrete contestation

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and the involved orthodox and heretical agents are specific to one field and should be – according to Bourdieu (1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) – observed in relation to that field and the power hierarchies within it. And indeed, if instead of the feminist field, the political field in each city and the there occurring struggle for definitions would be analysed, not only the participating agents would be different, but also the orthodox and heretical positioning on perpetrators and victims.

The heretical positioning in any field can be seen as a newcomer, due to its later appearance than the established one. However, as I will show in Chapter 5, in the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist fields alike, the heretical positioning was not a newcomers' positioning in the sense of being developed by those who have arrived later in the feminist field. Further common to the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist fields was that the same orthodox positioning on war rape – male sexual war violence against women is a universal phenomenon – was contested by adding ethnicity to the definition. Finally, in both feminist fields the positionings on war rape of the two self-declared antinationalist clusters underwent changes once more reliable factual information on this war crime emerged. The discovery of these modifications, which will receive extended attention in Chapter 4, is one of the significant novel findings of this research. It brings an important readjustment to the existing scholarship, which has thus far portrayed these positionings as immutable (Žarkov, 2002, 2007 on Belgrade is an important exception).

Bourdieu conceptualises the occupants of a field as agents whose thoughts, actions and feelings are conditioned by their position within that field and their socialisation – ie their habitus – but who, nevertheless, retain a certain level of freedom in choosing from the options which they see as being available to them. In doing so, they partially shape their future possibilities and decisions, and affect the course of their lives (Maton, 2008). This perception of all individuals as being simultaneously enabled and restrained stands in contrast with the denial of (feminist) agency of one's opponents which has been and still is articulated by a number of Belgrade and Zagreb feminists regardless of cluster. As I will show in Chapters 4 and 6, this delegitimation strategy usually manifested in negation of autonomy or accusation of not pursuing authentic women's interests.

The presence of the negation of autonomy means that one prominent contradiction can be observed in the oral and written utterances of some Belgrade and Zagreb feminists. While being outspokenly committed to the emancipation of women and their establishment as agents, these feminists simultaneously denied the emancipation of other feminists, ie their ability to form opinions and position themselves on (war-related) issues. That denial of the autonomy of the not like-minded

feminists also served to portray the speaker/writer and the like-minded feminists as particularly autonomous because of being capable of both establishing themselves as independent agents and disclosing the deceptive actions of others. Such a double function was performed also by the other form of delegitimation: the accusation of other feminists of pursuing personal instead of the interests of women in general. Thereby, the speaker/writer (implicitly) described herself as a disinterested party who purely advocated the highest good for women and did not aim at obtaining any personal gains – a strategy which Bourdieu calls ‘misrecognition’:

[A]kin to the idea of ‘false consciousness’ in the Marxist tradition, misrecognition denotes ‘denial’ of the economic and political interests present in a set of practices...Misrecognition is tied to Bourdieu’s strong claim that all actions are interested. The logic of self-interest underlying all practices...is misrecognized as a logic of ‘disinterest.’ Symbolic practices deflect attention from the interested character of practices and thereby contribute to their enactment as disinterested pursuits. This misperception legitimizes these practices and thereby contributes to the reproduction of the social order in which they are embedded (Swartz, 1997:89–90).

Contrary thus to the above portrayals of one’s agency, I do not perceive the struggle for legitimacy among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists as taking place between manipulated and critical feminists or between those with and those without a false consciousness.³² Following Bourdieu, I view all involved agents as concurrently enlightened and autonomous, as well as manipulated and constrained. While I do not claim that there were no individual differences among the feminists as regards their levels of autonomy and critical perception, I argue against any a priori classifications which are only based on one’s war-related positioning.

My conceptualisation of all feminists as agents has been additionally inspired by Saba Mahmood (2001, 2005) and Lois McNay (2000), who upheld that agency is not only formed in resistance to domination, subversion and resignification, but also in acceptance, accommodation and adaptation to norms and normative behaviour. Nonetheless, even if one would see agency only as a capacity to resist, subvert or resignify a positioning, one could still see the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists as agents because they resisted, subverted and resignified the up to then dominant (post-)Yugoslav feminist positioning which entailed that feminists were by definition

32 Sandra Harding (2004:8) describes this dichotomy as one between a ‘homogenous, oppressed, heroic, ideal knower and agent of history versus a homogenized, ideology-producing, economically and politically powerful ignoramus’.

antinationalist and that the (sexual) war crimes had a gender, but not an ethnicity. In a similar manner, the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists resisted the positioning, developed by the other Belgrade cluster, which added an ethnic dimension to the (sexual) war crimes. Thus, both feminist clusters in both cities resisted and subverted some norms, while accepting and accommodating others. There was, however, a disagreement between the clusters as to which norms were to be resisted and which were to be embraced – a struggle for the legitimate definition of the situation.

Memory is another important concept in this research, given that I primarily analyse events which took place in the 1990s. This does not, however, take away the fact that many of those events – as Andrea Zlatar (2005:14) has observed on a more general note – do not exclusively belong to the past, but extend to the present as well: ‘The warring 1990s have not become past neither in Croatia, nor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, nor in Serbia. Many unanswered questions have remained, much has been hushed up, many [questions] are suppressed, many [questions] nobody wants to hear about.’³³

The struggle for the definition of the wars and the (sexual) war crimes among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in the 1990s – which to a much smaller extent also takes place at present – overlaps with the comparable contest still vigorously going on in the historiographic and political fields in the two countries. Therefore, on this concrete issue, there is a partial overlap between the feminist, historiographic and political fields; they are not fully autonomous from each other. In the historiographic and political fields, the question how to define the (post-)Yugoslav wars is often linked to the struggle over defining World War II on the territory of Yugoslavia, ie the segment of World War II which concerns the role of the partisans and the local collaborators of the Axis powers. Thereby the same question is raised once more: who was the perpetrator and who was the victim, or who was waging a just war and who was not (*B92*, 10.07.2009; Bosto et al., 2008; Bosto and Cipek, 2009; Cipek, 2011; *E-novine*, 24.03.2012; Goldstein and Goldstein, 2011; Kamberović, 2006; *Nezavisne novine*, 10.02.2010; *Novi list*, 03.05.2009, 30.01.2011, 03.04.2012; *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 25.03.2012; Stojanović D., 2010).³⁴

33 This quotation is also quite germane to the handling of the contested past events among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists. This has, on the one hand, made my research very sensitive and labourious due to the great number of silences and (previously) unarticulated emotions. On the other hand, though, it was beneficial to the data collection: my (interview) inquiries were predominantly enthusiastically welcomed by the potential respondents given their need to speak about those years and events. I will return to this issue in the next – methodological – section of this chapter.

34 Different definitions of same events exist within one country and between countries. An analysis which was undertaken by 60 historians from the Balkans, gathered in the Thessaloniki-based ‘Joint History Project’, showed radical discrepancies between the ways

The stakes in this struggle are very high, not only because the legitimacy which a certain positioning receives brings legitimacy (symbolic capital) to its proponent, but also because of the scarce capacity for remembering – both on the collective and on an individual level. Writing on the collective memories of the Dutch colonial past, Frances Gouda (2007:12) has stressed that

[t]he process of remembering and forgetting is forever in flux. Memory concerning the historical record, as a constitutive force in the cognitive and imaginative fashioning of any nation-state, can be envisioned as a museum in which space is acutely limited. At certain moments in time, when a particular historical narrative has lost its luster or strategic usefulness, it must be removed from the museum of public recollections.

The struggle for the limited memory space has been conjured up well by Orli Fridman through the example of the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist feminist group Women in Black. Fridman (2006a:294) addressed the group's silent vigils on the Belgrade main square whereby the activists demanded of the Serbian state to assume its responsibility for the Srebrenica genocide and officially commemorate it:

The difficulty that the demonstrators had in finding the space to stand and convey their message on the square that evening serves as a metaphor for the similar effort to raise those same issues in the public sphere, and include them in Serbia's public discourse. The struggle to make the memory of Srebrenica present in the streets of Belgrade is a metaphor for the struggle over the memory of the wars, the atrocities, and the war crimes. This is a struggle over the creation of collective memory, as it addresses the question of how Serbian society will deal with and remember the events that took place during the wars in Croatia, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later in Kosovo.

Like any other struggle in a field, the struggle for memory is also marked by the presence of orthodox and heretical positionings: '[m]emories supportive of the maintenance of existing power structures are usually assured wider social space

in which the 20th century had been portrayed in the history school textbooks of each Balkan country. According to Dubravka Stojanović, one of the involved historians from Serbia, the differences have been so great that it would be difficult at times to apprehend that all dissimilar versions addressed the same historical episode. A lack of unanimity has existed even on the dates when some major events – such as the First Balkan War in 1912 – had started, since an earlier or later date portrayed the country in question in a more or less favourable light (B92, 24.04.2009; see also *Joint History Project* website; Stojanović D., 2010).

and easier transmission' (Leydesdorff et al., 1996:8). As I will show in Chapter 6, the unequal power status of the memories or positionings is also visible in the way in which the self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists referred in 2009 or 2010 to the divisions in the 1990s. The already addressed importance of distinguishing between the fields should once again not be overlooked because the same one positioning can be heretical in the feminist field, while being dominant in the political field. Nevertheless, the latter would not mean much to a feminist who seeks legitimacy within the feminist field.

The last concept which I address here is myth. According to Dvora Yanow (2000:80), '[w]e create myths as an act of mediating contradictions, such as those that arise when we are faced with accommodating in daily life the mandates of two (or more) irreconcilable values. Myths direct our attention away from such incommensurables'. In the 1990s, just like naming, myths were employed by the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists from both clusters for the purpose of establishing themselves as legitimate agents with an unambiguous and consistent positioning. Nonetheless, unlike naming, which came into existence only after the beginning of the war violence, the use of one particular myth was commonly present already in times of Yugoslavia.

The Belgrade and Zagreb feminists tried to mobilise themselves and others by using the idea of sisterhood – ie commonality, cooperation and solidarity – among women in general due to their shared underprivileged gender-based position in the society. However, even in peacetime Yugoslavia there were disagreements among the feminists, such as that about the right type of feminist engagement (see eg in Chapter 3 my portrayal of the establishment of the Women's Group Trešnjevka in Zagreb). Obviously, the mobilising idea of sisterhood could not always be carried out in practice even among feminists since not all of them shared the same ambitions and world views. It is for this reason that I consider sisterhood a myth: it had to superficially reconcile the simultaneous existence of commonalities and differences among women. On a different note, to employ a metaphoric portrayal (all women as sisters) for communicating a myth (sisterhood) was not coincidental. Murray Edelman (1971:70) has observed that 'metaphors highlight the benefits that flow from a course of action and erase its unfortunate concomitants, helping speaker and listeners [or: writer and readers] to conceal disturbing implications from themselves'. The use of a metaphor served, thus, to strengthen the myth which was to be communicated.

Another example of this phenomenon is the metaphor of transgression of boundaries (or crossing the lines). It was used by the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists after the beginning of Yugoslavia's violent disintegration. This new metaphor resulted from and reaffirmed the idea of sisterhood and, as such,

did not essentially differ from the metaphor of women as sisters. Nevertheless, it was adapted to the changed reality. By using this metaphor, the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists accentuated their brave continuation of the cooperation between them across the newly established ethnic and state demarcation lines, and despite the war violence and the state politics. At the same time, though, that image obscured the parallel creation of a boundary by the same feminists: one which separated them from the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists who did not want to continue the exchange with those from the other city. The metaphor of crossing the lines concealed the fact that only some feminists from each city participated in this cooperation and that misunderstandings and conflicts occurred even between the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists.³⁵

Methodology

Positionality of the researcher

The assertion that all knowledge production is situated (Haraway, 1988) refers not only to the context in which the particular knowledge is generated. It also conceptualises the location of the knowledge producer as ontologically and epistemologically relevant. The scientist's life experience influences the formulation of research topics, the choice of and the access to research subjects, the data collection and analysis, and the findings and conclusions. Therefore, 'being reflexive about one's own positionality is [not] to self-indulge but to reflect on how one is inserted in grids of power relations and

35 A good illustration of the often covert emphasis on the cooperation with some feminists and the hushing up of the split with others is the poem 'Crossing the Line'. It was written by the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist Biljana Kašić and appeared in 1994 on the first page of a Belgrade feminist publication (Kašić, 1994b). The author drew an explicit contrast between 'us' (women) who crossed boundaries and 'them' (men) who created them. No ethnic or geographic indications were provided. At the bottom of the page, the Belgrade editors added a note which clearly expressed the at the time markedly politically daring alliance between Belgrade and Zagreb civilians: 'Biljana thought of us when she wrote the poem. By publishing it, we think of Biljana and our female comrades from Zagreb' (Četković et al., 1994:1). Still, the story which the poem narrated – the gender-based collaboration across and despite the ethnic boundaries and state borders, the mutual understanding and the shared dreams and goals – did not actually concern all Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, let alone all women. Since the so-called nationalist feminists from each city did not cooperate with the feminists from the other city, the real (but only alluded to) actors of the poem and the accompanying note were the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists.

how that influences methods, interpretations, and knowledge production' (Sultana, 2007:376).

I was a multiple insider-outsider in this research. Being born and raised in Macedonia (one of the former Yugoslav republics) and being of Macedonian ethnicity proved to be beneficial for doing this research, since the Macedonians are not usually perceived as an involved party in the (post-)Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. I had spent two-thirds of my life in the (post-)Yugoslav region, including the period when Yugoslavia started becoming 'former'. After finishing in 2000 the one-year programmes in Women's Studies and Peace Studies at the Zagreb-based Centre for Women's Studies and Centre for Peace Studies, respectively, I moved to the Netherlands to study Sociology and Gender Studies. During my life in the Netherlands I maintained my familiarity with the work of the feminist groups and the general situation in Croatia and Serbia (and Bosnia and Herzegovina) through personal communication, frequent travels, and printed and electronic media.

My active participation in diverse groups in Macedonia during the 1990s had sensitised me to the not war-related organisational issues my respondents referred to, such as conflicts regarding preferred leadership style, task division or participation at conferences abroad. Due to my interest in women's rights and feminism, I had met most of my potential self-declared antinationalist respondents already before this research.³⁶ Many of them were my first teachers of feminism, although we have never cooperated closely. I was, however, much more of an outsider to the so-called nationalist feminists. This was especially the case regarding the Zagreb ones. Prior to my engagement with this topic, I was quite unfamiliar with their names and work. In consequence, the level of trust between me and the self-declared antinationalist respondents (from both cities) was usually higher than that between me and the feminists from the two so-called nationalist clusters.

Finally, this research has strongly benefited from my full fluency in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and native familiarity with the Cyrillic alphabet – the second official script in Yugoslavia next to the Latin one – which was used in a significant amount of relevant documents and texts. These linguistic skills have allowed me to obtain rich and extensive empirical material by conducting interviews in the respondents'

36 My proximity to their work has produced several unexpected joyful moments of 'stumbling upon myself' during the fieldwork. For example, in one organisational archive in Zagreb I came across a letter of mine which I had written in 1998 in support of several Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists. Another such encounter took place in a conversation with a Belgrade self-declared antinationalist respondent. I learned that in 1991 she had co-authored the (unsigned) antiwar leaflet which I had translated into Macedonian exactly ten years later, during the war in Macedonia.

native language,³⁷ examining original documents and using the scholarship which was only available in local languages. Moreover, my ability to read texts in Dutch, English, French, German and Slovenian has further contributed to the (innovative) quality of my research findings.

Data selection, sampling and access

The purpose of the data collection in this research was to gather information which would enable me to:

- contextualise and compare the (development of the) war-related positionings of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists between 1991 and 2000,
- explore the relations between the feminists' biographical data (eg age, education, ethnicity, parents' profession and involvement with feminism) and their war-related positionings, and
- analyse how the divisions between the feminists in the 1990s were remembered and interpreted by them at the time of interviewing (2009 or 2010).

Due to the inductive nature of this research, the data collection was not theoretically but empirically informed, ie guided by the previously obtained data. The data were primarily obtained from written sources which were found in personal, organisational or state archives and libraries,³⁸ and from qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews with Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, as well as several external respondents, as I explain below. In addition to this, and to a much smaller extent, I gathered data from relevant documentary films and internet presentations. The written sources included documents produced by the feminists themselves or their groups – eg (academic) articles, books, conference reports, correspondence, leaflets, mission statements, newsletters, press-releases and statutes) – as well as newspaper and magazine items written by third parties. Despite the significant time investment, due to frequent incorrect referencing of media articles, I generally strove to obtain a copy of the original texts instead of relying on the authors who had mentioned them.

37 With the exception of the Kosovar Albanian and Slovenian respondents.

38 In addition to the personal archives and libraries of my respondents and the organisational ones of the groups they were/had been active in, I gathered information from Atria – Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History in Amsterdam, International Women's Peace Archives Fasia Jansen in Oberhausen, Green Memory Archives in Berlin, Croatian State Archives, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, and National and University Library – all in Zagreb, and National Library of Serbia in Belgrade.

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The data were collected primarily during a fieldwork period of 12 months (September 2008 – August 2009 and September 2010), most of which was spent in Belgrade and Zagreb. I also travelled to Berlin and Oberhausen to do archival research, as well as to Ljubljana, Prishtina and Sarajevo to conduct interviews with the external respondents. In light of the sensitive character of my research, which was recurrently confirmed by the interactions with my (potential) respondents, I chose not to contact them after the fieldwork for additional information. The very few occasions when I nevertheless did that concerned issues which I deemed unproblematic. In other words, I refrained from reopening any sensitive issues after the closure of the fieldwork period and the direct face-to-face exchange with the respondents. Although this choice not to pursue the data collection further meant that I could not fill some of the gaps revealed by the post-fieldwork data analysis, I granted priority to the maintenance of ethically responsible relationships.

The selection of potential respondents was originally intended to take place by a two-stage sampling process: initial selection of key self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminist groups from Belgrade and Zagreb, followed by a selection of their key activists. This plan, however, was adjusted to the situation on the ground. Whereas in Zagreb one could speak of self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminist groups, it turned out that in Belgrade there has never been such a pronounced split among the feminists. No feminist group there was considered nationalist; this name was used only for individual feminists. Furthermore, not all Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups have saved their archives, and the existing ones were more often than not incomplete and unsystematic.

This, as well as the fact that not all archives were accessible, meant that it was a risky step to assume that for each selected group I would find data which would be comparable to the data found on the other groups in the sample. Finally, in both cities one's affiliation to a particular feminist group was far from a fixed category: some feminists were active in several groups, some left one group and joined another, others left one group to establish a new one, and there were also feminists who had withdrawn from a group for some time only to return to it later. This fluidity of group membership was enabled by the fact that much of the activism in the 1990s was conducted on a voluntarily basis or for a small honorarium.

In light of these insights, I let my sample develop more organically, ie be guided by the incoming data. I conducted primarily purposive sampling which I supplemented with much more limited snowball sampling. Being aware of the scarcity of relevant empirical material in the scholarship and the difficulty of obtaining this material due to its sensitivity, I looked for the apparently most information-rich

respondents. The individual feminists whom I sampled were those who – based on the scholarship, organisational documents, media sources or information from other informants – had been directly and prominently involved in the war-related activism in Belgrade or Zagreb from the beginning of the 1990s. Since most of them had been active feminists already in the late 1980s, I could ask them about their first-hand experiences of the divisions and alliances among the feminists which were brought along by the (violent) disintegration of the country. Due to the even greater scarcity of information on the Belgrade and Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists, I made a point of interviewing all four prominent Belgrade feminists who were seen by some as nationalists and tracking down the key representatives of all Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist groups.

The discovery of silences and myths surrounding the war-related feminist activism inspired me to look for insider-outsider perspectives. I conducted a few less extensive interviews with Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, as well as with two feminists from two other towns in Croatia. These respondents had been less prominently involved on the war-related issues, but had worked closely with the prominently involved ones. In addition to this, I interviewed several external respondents who had had extensive ties with my main respondents. The external respondents were peace activists in Belgrade and Zagreb, feminists based in Ljubljana, Prishtina and Sarajevo, and one Zagreb-based American sociologist and feminist activist. She is, so to say, my most external respondent. I selected her because starting from the late 1980s she had been in touch with the (post-)Yugoslav feminists and written about them. In the mid-1990s she had moved to Zagreb to be the regional director of an American donor agency, which by the second half of the 1990s had become one of the main funders of women's groups in the post-Yugoslav countries (a position she no longer held at the time of interviewing).³⁹

In total, I approached 55 women for interviewing, seven of whom turned out to be unavailable. This means that the interview invitations were met with a positive response rate of 87%. Four out of the seven non-respondents were Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists: one never responded to my inquiries, while three declined the invitation due to a grave illness, the emotional character of the research, and a lack of

39 Between June 1996 and October 1997 I was employed in the Macedonian office of this donor agency. I met some of my future respondents then, but given that my work focused on Macedonia, I did not engage with them much. In hindsight, this limitation has been very fortunate. A more extensive previous involvement as an employee of a funding body might have greatly biased this research, especially since the agency in question explicitly supported only 'non-nationalistic women's organizations' (*Report on the Impact Assessment*, 20.11.2006).

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trust in my interpretation. The remaining three potential respondents wrote back that they could not participate because of a lack of time. Those women were one Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminist, and one Belgrade and one Ljubljana external activist.

I conducted interviews with 48 women, 12 of whom were external respondents. The remaining 36 respondents are classified in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Main and additional interview respondents

	Main self-declared antinationalist respondents	Main so-called nationalist respondents	Additional self-declared antinationalist respondents	Additional so-called nationalist respondents
Belgrade	9	4	2	0
Zagreb	8	7	5 (including 2 active in other Croatian towns)	1

This brings me to the issue of the representativeness of my sample. The use of purposive and snowball sampling, whereby the accent was placed on respondents with presumably significant knowledge on the war-related coalitions and divisions between and among the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, limits my ability to draw general conclusions on the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists. Due to the absence of (stratified) random sampling in combination with a large sample size, I cannot extrapolate my findings on eg the relation between the educational level and the use of so-called nationalist positionings to all Belgrade or all Zagreb feminists. So, although I speak for the sake of simplicity about ‘Belgrade and Zagreb feminists’, my findings should be understood as only concerning the feminists who have prominently articulated their views on the war-related issues in the 1990s.

The good and quite unique access which I had to the field consisted not only of a great number of people willing to be (extensively) interviewed, but also of the readiness of many to allow me to freely go through their private home libraries and archives. The latter was more often the case with the self-declared antinationalist respondents. Nevertheless, I also experienced that one Zagreb so-called nationalist feminist went to the Croatian State Archives to give her permission for my full access to her group’s documents which were under a very restricted access for privacy and sensitivity reasons. There were also respondents who were very eager to personally search for a document or a book which they considered important for my research. Without my asking, some respondents voluntarily told me why they had given me

such access. One set of reasons had to do with my position and the other with their need to reflect (aloud) upon those contested and silenced issues for which there was not otherwise much time or safe space. According to Allan Nevins (1996:31), this type of need is often beneficial to the collection of oral testimonies:

[N]ot infrequently they [the respondents] had long felt a desire to furnish their own account of an important transaction or controversial period, but had lacked time and opportunity until suddenly seated before a tape recorder with a well-equipped interviewer before them.

Even though nobody has said it to me openly, I suspect that the abandonment of the communication between many feminists and the subsequent unexpressed positionings and emotions have positively affected the data collection for my thesis. I believe that the willingness which I encountered had also to do with the chance which I gave to the respondents to reach out to one another through me. In this way they were able to communicate to others that which had been left unsaid but was still very much alive. Finally, I see the good access as also resulting from the perception which some respondents had of me. They saw me as their personal biographer or a research assistant who would write their story or pursue their research interest. These reasons were explicitly communicated to me only by one respondent. She said that it was good that I was doing this since she did not have the time for it. At other times it was implied through suggestions about the direction my research should take and the topics which should enter the dissertation. This points to the reverse side of the good access: the great challenge to remain true to one's own research agenda and results while communicating this commitment and one's findings in a considerate manner.

Description of the interviews

Most of the interviews lasted between two and a half and three hours. The shortest interview lasted one hour and the longest six hours. During the interviews with the main respondents, in addition to the questions about some significant war-related feminist and/or antiwar events, and the respondents' positionings and interpretations of the divisions among them in the 1990s, I dedicated considerable time to exploring their personal trajectories. I asked these feminists about eg their age, ethnicity, educational level, family background, profession, religious beliefs, affiliation with Yugoslavia, motivation for engaging in feminist activism, past and present-day involvement in organised feminism, and their personal situation during the wars. Such intensive inquiry into the background, subjectivities and lives of the feminist activists

was not only necessary for situating the agents within the feminist field. It proved to be a quite urgent research endeavour in light of the fragility of human life, ie the untimely passing away of several important feminists and peace activists, including five women whom I would have loved to interview and two whom I did interview.⁴⁰

I did not work with a fully standardised set of interview questions. Each interview was at least 50% custom-made, and I also left space for posing questions on issues which would surface in the course of the interview. The standardised set addressed the life trajectories (this part was significantly shorter in the interviews with the additional and external respondents) and the war-related splits between the feminists. The custom-made questions referred to concrete statements made by the respondent in question and seemingly important events which she had attended and/or written about. I asked for more details on these events, as well as for clarifications on those statements which I had not quite understood when I had come across them in the written, video or internet sources, or had them recounted by other respondents.

The large amount of custom-made questions meant that prior to each interview I read as many writings or statements by the respondent in question as possible, so that I could use that material in the interview to ask for a very specific explanation or commentary. Albeit very exhausting and time-consuming, this strategy turned out to be very rewarding. It helped me to better and more quickly decipher the statements wherein the respondents would not give explicit answers or disclose concrete names of people and groups. The same was true for the allusions made outside the interview context, ie during the informal conversations or in the (scholarly) articles. Furthermore, considering the instability and malleability of human memory, it was thanks to these preparations that I was able to assist or correct my respondents regarding eg the dates of an event or the names of those who had attended it. Finally, this strategy improved the rapport between me and the respondents. I was able to converse more easily with them, while they appreciated my knowledge on the topic and familiarity with their work and/or statements.

The need for an extensive custom-made part of the interviews was raised primarily by the lack of historiography on the war-related feminist activism in Belgrade

40 The early death of many people who have been active in feminist, peace and/or human rights groups in the (post-)Yugoslav region in the 1990s is commonly attributed to existential insecurity, poor nutrition, poverty, sleep deprivation, work overload, as well as the absence of proper medical care and the war-induced environmental pollution. I have heard people referring to this sad and worrisome pattern as: 'The 1990s have taken their toll again', 'the 1990s' tax' or in the words of the Bosnian and Herzegovinian writer Abdulah Sidran: 'There goes one more who thought he [sic] had survived the war' (*Dnevni avaz*, 07.03.2007).

and Zagreb. More precisely, in order to be able to interpret the positionings on the wars and each other, I first needed to find out the factual information, such as who, when and why had organised the event in question, who had (not) been invited and why, and who had (not) come and why. This quest for information was a very demanding task for me and my respondents alike, given that more often than not there were hardly any available original documents on a particular event. I was aware of the impossibility of fully reconstructing an event, and yet I also needed some anchors in the form of concrete scenes and utterances around which my respondents could construct their stories, and I mine. Also this labourious undertaking proved useful. The recollection of one episode usually helped the respondent remember more information on that or other events.

Use of interviews and respondents' reactions to the transcripts

Since all but one interview were not conducted in English, a decision had to be made regarding the translation. I chose not to translate any transcript beforehand and perform the analysis on the original language of the interview. Towards the end of the writing I translated into English only those parts which I wanted to include as quotations or paraphrases in the text of the dissertation. This was done at such a late stage not only in order to save time, but also in order to reduce to the greatest possible extent the loss of meaning which is intrinsic to the translation process.

I treated the interviews – as well as the organisational documents and articles – as a resource and as a topic, ie a text to be subjected to a discourse analysis. In the first usage, the interview serves to 'discover things about events outside the interview situation' (Seale, 2000:215), such as the historical information I was after. In the second usage, 'the accomplishments of participants are investigated through a detailed examination of the language people deploy' (ibid), including the manner in which the respondents frame their statements and the places which have remained silent in their narratives. In my research, this concerned the collection of data on how the respondents portrayed themselves, their fellow feminists, and the events they had been (in)directly part of.

The use of interviews for obtaining valid historical knowledge is often practiced by oral historians, but not everybody within the historiographic field is convinced of the suitability of interviews (or oral histories) for this purpose. The critics perceive this method as far too context-dependent, malleable and subjective to be able to provide any objective factual data (Grele, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1997; Roberts, 2002). But, to say that oral history is subjective implies that the traditional historiography

is objective and therefore reliable,⁴¹ even though ‘any writing about the past is a subsequent reconstruction, and...no history reaches us unmediated’ (Leydesdorff et al., 1996:12).

To discard oral sources in historiography would mean a rejection of all research topics for which there are no written or other material sources available, which would cause a great bias in historiography. Such a move would also leave unused the privilege of asking additional information from the direct actors present at events or from the authors of material sources – an opportunity which is often not available in historical research because of the time distance from the analysed event. It remains nevertheless important, just like in working with any data source, to use triangulation for validating the historical data obtained from interviews (Lummis, 1998). In line with this, with the exception of the biographical data, I have put great effort into crosschecking the information gathered from an interview against information which I collected elsewhere (eg press releases, newspaper articles, other interviews, already existing analyses etc).

Another way to evaluate the historical information obtained from the interviews – or any other source – is by checking for internal consistency or coherence. Seen on its own, an inconsistent or incoherent life story would be a problematic source of historical information, but on a different level this does not mean that that story would be devoid of value or meaning: “wrong” statements are still psychologically “true,” and...this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts’ (Portelli, 1992:51). Actually, although contradictions in life stories are to be expected – since nobody has a coherent, unitary and unchanging self – they are at odds with the human need to have an ‘illusion of wholeness’ (Ewing, 1990). Consequently, ‘[i]n order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story’ (Linde, 1993:3).

The demand to present oneself as a coherent agent turned out to be particularly important to some of the respondents. Several of them explicitly demanded to receive the interview transcript for authorisation, but in order to treat all the respondents

41 To speak with Bourdieu, this kind of contestation is a good example of the struggle between an orthodox (dominant) discourse and a heretical challenger. Another example is the issue of quotas and positive discrimination. The opponents of the use of these policy measures with regard to eg women say that it would lead to employment of less qualified (worse) candidates since excellence would no longer be the selection criterion. The chance that some of the employed men have not received their jobs due to their superior qualities, but due to stereotypical ideas about their gender-induced abilities, is hereby conveniently disregarded.

equally, I sent the transcripts to everybody. The reactions were diverse. One part of the respondents did not make any significant alterations to the transcript, whereas others made substantial changes. These are the only respondents about whom I know for certain that the issue of coherence mattered dearly. They changed the order of sentences, provided (extensive) additional explanations and made many language and style changes. Four respondents even rewrote most of the transcript.

While these rewritten texts differ from the intact or slightly altered transcripts, that did not prevent me from using them as a source of historical information, as well as from examining how the respondents wanted to structure their arguments and speak about other feminists in front of me. In order to attend to the significant information which was contained in the substantial alterations, I clearly marked all those changes, including the erasures of (parts of) sentences in the original transcript. While considerably extending the duration of the analysis, this enabled me to have both versions of the transcript in a single file and use them both in the analysis. Nonetheless, for ethical reasons, none of the erased fragments has entered this dissertation either as a quotation or a paraphrase.

There is further a group of respondents whose concern with coherence I can only surmise. To begin with, this applies to the two self-declared antinationalist respondents (one from Belgrade and one from Zagreb) who informed me explicitly that they wished to withdraw their transcripts, the former because of a – further unexplained – feeling of bitterness the transcript had left her with, and the latter due to her lack of trust in my analysis. The seven respondents (three Zagreb so-called nationalist and one self-declared antinationalist, one additional from Zagreb, one external from Ljubljana and one Belgrade self-declared antinationalist), who tacitly terminated the communication after I had sent them the transcript for authorisation, belong to this group as well. Their silence entailed that they have never told me what they thought of the transcript and whether they would authorise it or not. Actually, one of them said that she would look at it in a few days and another respondent wrote that she did not want me to use the transcript before her authorisation, but neither of them got back to me afterwards. All these respondents received emails and mobile text messages from me telling them that if I had not heard from them by a given date, I would treat their transcripts as authorised. Consequently, this is how I used them in the analysis.

This brings me to the recurring theme in my research: its very sensitive and emotional character for my respondents. Albeit to a different extent, this played a role in all interviews and in some cases also before, when I was introducing myself and my research to the prospective respondent and trying to arrange an interview with

her. As it will become clear from the rest of the thesis, the word ‘implicit(ly)’ is one of the words which appear in it most frequently. This consequence of my respondents’ common use of covert statements required a lot of time for reading between the lines and thereby also recognising (unforeseen) silences and problematic places. Another manifestation of this avoidance to give unambiguous statements and references was the recurring phenomenon of having respondents say to me: ‘I will not mention any names, have the others tell you.’⁴² Obviously, this led to an additional time-consuming search for clues on who the persons in question were – not only in the succeeding interviews, but also in all other texts and video material which I had at my disposal.

The charged nature of my research topic was further visible in the words and fragments which had disappeared, ie had been taken out, from the authorised interview transcripts. Most of these alterations concerned conflicts with and criticism of other feminists. Sometimes only the personal names or certain laden or slang words were erased, other times whole sentences, and at yet other times the whole description of the episode was removed. Occasionally, the parts which had been deleted were replaced with more neutral terms or formulations.

Before sending out the transcripts, only one respondent had asked to be quoted by a different name. This number did not increase significantly after the reception of the transcripts, probably because those with the greatest objections had either broken the communication with me, withdrawn the transcript or made huge alterations in it to make it, in their view, presentable to a broader public. After reading the transcripts two more respondents opted for anonymity, whereas two others chose to be quoted with their initials. For the sake of uniformity I decided eventually to use code names for all respondents⁴³ – a choice I informed them about per email. I resorted to employing code names not only because of the five respondents who had asked not to be quoted by their real name. I also had in mind the respondent who had passed away without having the chance to read her transcript and decide upon this issue, as well as the seven respondents who had stopped communicating with me.

42 The most bizarre exchange in this sense happened when I was trying to find out the name of the feminist with whom the respondent had parted ways. This was the – here anonymised – dialogue:

Me: What was her positioning, ie your perception of her positioning?

Respondent: I would not like to... *It is better to ask her.* It would not be good to interpret her positioning.

Me: But *I do not know who the person in question is.*

Respondent: No, *I do not want to tell her name* (emphasis added).

43 The code names are explained in the list of conducted interviews which is featured in Appendix B.

Although I felt confident to treat their transcripts as authorised, I found it unethical to mention them by name without their explicit permission.

All these reactions to the interview transcripts become even more telling about the sensitivity of this research and some respondents' need for coherence if one takes into account the following three pieces of information which I provided upon sending the transcript for authorisation. First, I explained to my respondents that, since a presentation of oral histories was not my goal, I did not intend to publish the whole interview text, but only some sentences. Second, I pointed out that, since some respondents had referred to other feminists by name during the interview, while others had only said 'a colleague' or 'a woman', I would take out for the sake of homogeneity all personal names from the quoted fragments. Third, just like during the interview, I let each respondent choose once more (after having seen the transcript) how she wanted to be quoted.

Besides using code names to refer to the respondents' interview statements, I sometimes employed the same code names also in the literature references. I did this to conceal the particular respondent's identity in the situations when I juxtaposed an interview statement of that respondent with a scholarly text of hers. Nevertheless, I wish I could have kept the full names in the text – a choice which would have pleased some respondents, too. My initial ambition had after all been to write a thesis which would provide a larger contribution to the historiography of the (post-)Yugoslav feminism in the 1990s. I saw the urgency of inscribing the full names of the direct actors given the large gaps in the historiography, the already mentioned fragility of human life and the influence of time on the fading and loss of human memories and paper documents alike. Furthermore, by documenting these feminists' names I wanted to pay them a more explicit tribute for the immense amount of important work which they had conducted under very difficult conditions; work which has not received the recognition it deserves within Croatia and Serbia. It is my sincere hope, therefore, that future research efforts on this and related topics will not have to navigate a minefield and will manage to attend to the historiographic lacunae which have been partly reproduced by this thesis due to the absence of real names.

Challenges during the research process

In addition to the already mentioned responsibility resulting from my good access to the field and the emotional character of the addressed topic for my respondents, I encountered several other challenges which I classify as technical, emotional and integrity ones. The first of the technical difficulties, which significantly slowed down

the processes of data collection and analysis, was the presence of undated and unsigned organisational documents. Another problem was posed by the archived photocopies of published newspaper or magazine articles which did not contain the date and/or the name of the medium. In those situations, unless I could obtain the correct information from a respondent, I had to manually look for the article in question because the Croatian and Serbian newspapers and magazines from the 1990s were not digitalised. Furthermore, it happened often that a respondent would mention an (academic) article she had written or a talk she had given, but could not give me a copy since she had not kept any. If the text seemed important to my research, I would put a lot of effort in trying to find it. This was especially true for the articles for which the respondents could only vaguely remember the medium in which they had been published.

The poor condition of many personal and organisational archives created an additional challenge. Since none of these archives has been kept under the proper storage conditions, the documents – especially those on thermal fax paper – were gradually becoming destroyed by warmth, light, moisture, dust and dirt. This situation is quite worrisome considering the malleability of memory and the different perceptions of same events. It also exposes the importance of preserving original documents in professionally run and publicly accessible archives so that they could be used for socio-historical analyses and a creation of a more shared view of the past.

The data collection was also burdened by foreign authors' insufficient attentiveness in registering the personal names of the (post-)Yugoslav activists. Due to this, the digitalised search for foreign articles by using these names as key words bore fruit only occasionally and typically after a labour- and time-intensive search. Many foreign authors had (at times quite seriously) misspelled or incorrectly transliterated the names of the people whom they quoted. For example, I came across 'Besic' instead of the factual 'Kašić', 'Zaidgiz' instead of 'Daidžić', and 'Durda Miklauvic' instead of 'Đurđa Miklaužić'.

The emotional challenges which I faced during the fieldwork were also diverse. I learned the hard way that going back in time meant to observe in a highly condensed manner the process of arrival and progression of the wars, the lies and the illusions which were communicated by the politicians and the military leaders, and the inability of the (feminist) activists to stop the wars and the war rapes. Often during the interviews and the informal conversations with my respondents, I felt as if I had opened Pandora's Box and exposed myself to an avalanche of hitherto silenced emotions, memories and positionings.

I also became aware that working on a topic which concerned a period of war violence meant a regular, albeit indirect, exposure to terrible war crimes and other

forms of destruction and inhumanity. Sometimes, the victims and the atrocities came very close to me and became quite real, almost tangible. This happened, for example, when I stumbled upon the hand-written testimonies of war victims or when I looked at personal items of murdered people, including their identification papers (issued in Yugoslavia, just like my own back then). It took me a while to learn to cope with such unsettling encounters; they not only brought me a much more profound realisation of the intensity and the consequences of the wars, but also confronted me once again with the vulnerability of human life, including my own.

Lastly, a set of integrity challenges was posed by the fact that this concrete analysis of silenced issues concerned a recent period of war violence and still living actors. This demanded a careful and thoughtful communication with the (potential) respondents, impossibility to subcontract the transcription and translation of the interviews, time to internally process the respondents' narratives of violence, intensive pain and anger, as well as an obligation to formulate criticism in a considerate manner, while simultaneously preserving my commitment towards science. Such a sensitive approach was also needed in view of my previous acquaintance with the majority of my respondents, the ongoing communication with many of them, as well as my ambition to continue contributing to the development of feminism, human rights and peace in the post-Yugoslav region.

Advocating Slow Science

In closing, I would like to point out that my experience in doing this research – especially the use of extensive qualitative interviews and archival materials, the time required to double-check one's data, process and reflect upon the difficult issues raised by the research, as well as build ethically responsible relationships with the respondents – has made me an advocate of the Slow Science trend in conducting academic research. Albeit for the time being still marginal, this trend challenges the increasing demand to accelerate and shorten the research process and quickly come up with publishable academic products (Alleva, 2006; Candau, 2010; Fischer J., Ritchie and Hanspach, 2012; Salo and Heikkinen, 2011; Stengers, 2011).

Outline of the thesis

The next, second, chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the previous scholarship on the Belgrade and/or Zagreb war-related feminist activism in the 1990s. In the first part

of the chapter I address the biases and silent places which I have discovered in that scholarship and offer explanations for their presence. This concerns the domination of the designations used by the self-declared antinationalist feminists, the political component of the scholarly texts, the lack of analyses of the post-1995 developments, the limited to non-existent presence of certain conflicts in the literature, the insufficient attention for the feminists' biographies, and the geographical or homogenising bias in the scholarship.

In the second part of Chapter 2 I analyse the different ways in which the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists with divergent war-related positionings have been classified and named. I pay individual attention to the joint and separate portrayals of the Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists, as well as to the separate depictions (no joint ones exist) of the two so-called nationalist clusters. I demonstrate that in addition to the most oft-used terms 'antinationalist', 'nationalist', 'non-nationalist' and 'patriotic', there are diverse other adjectival and adverbial designations, that the same terms can connote different things, and that the designations are good indications of the scholar's greater or lesser support of one positioning or another. As such, this chapter attends to proposition 2 and gives one part of the answer (the other parts are given in Chapters 4 and 6) to the question why these designations should not be seen as value-free and objective, even though they corresponded to a certain extent to actual positionings. It does so by showing that these terms and the process of naming were an important part of the struggle for legitimacy.

Chapter 3 consists of two parts as well. In the first part I give a short overview of the historical context of Yugoslavia between its founding after World War II and end in 1991, including the occurrences which contributed towards its violent disintegration. I also pay attention to the reappearance of feminism in the 1970s – first only as an intellectual endeavour and later also as a grassroots activist one. In addition to this, I address the 1990s, but only with regard to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia (including Kosovo). By doing this, I set the stage for a better understanding of the war-related positionings of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in the 1990s and the dynamics which existed between and among the feminists from each city.

While these positionings and dynamics are analysed in the remaining chapters as well, they are already touched upon (announced as it were) in the second part of Chapter 3. I outline there the work of the Belgrade and Zagreb feminist groups which are relevant for this research, with a particular focus on their war-related activities. That presentation also contains one part of the answer – the other is given in Chapter 4 – to the question why proposition 1b on the differences between the clusters in their (lack of) support to (raped) refugee women should be rejected. In addition to this, it

also shows partially why proposition 3 cannot be fully accepted. I explain that while the differences in the war-related positionings have indeed caused great tensions among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, they were sometimes intertwined with non-war-related frictions – some taking place in the 1990s and others stemming from the pre-war period.

Chapter 4 contains analyses of nine historical episodes which illustrate the dynamics among the feminists upon which I seek to shed light. Eight episodes are specific occurrences in the 1990s and one is a Belgrade feminist group which is significant because of the events which have taken place within it. I start with the proposal for establishing a Yugoslav feminist umbrella group in the spring of 1990 and end with the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the intensification of the war in Kosovo in the spring of 1999. I explore the gradual development of similar and different positionings among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists, and the varied contexts in which these positionings have been articulated throughout the 1990s. I attend to the influence of Western (funding) audiences on the struggles for legitimacy, as well as to the interactions among the feminists in the absence of third parties.

The selected episodes are not only temporarily and geographically diverse, but also differ with respect to which feminists were the key agents in the concrete struggle. For example, during the meeting in Venice in February 1992 the main actors were Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists. At the Medulin meeting in March 1995 the main interaction was between Belgrade and Zagreb self-declared antinationalist feminists, and in the analysis of the Belgrade Women's Studies Center I elaborate upon the frictions between the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminists. Due to its extensive and diverse empirical material and large scope, this chapter touches upon all propositions.

The biographical differences and similarities among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists are illuminated in Chapter 5. This chapter differs from the other empirical chapters because it only presents data on the key respondents of my research, ie the main producers of the self-declared antinationalist and so-called nationalist feminist positionings in each city. In order to explore the relations between the biographical characteristics and the war-related positionings, I lay out two comparisons: the Zagreb self-declared antinationalist with the Zagreb so-called nationalist feminists, and the Belgrade self-declared antinationalist with the Belgrade so-called nationalist feminists. In addition, I also compare all Belgrade with all Zagreb respondents.

CHAPTER ONE

This zooming in and out helps me demonstrate that although a number of important findings can be drawn even when the aggregated geographical categories (Belgrade and Zagreb respondents) are contrasted, more valid and pertinent results can be obtained only if both the context and the type of positioning are taken into account. Next to substantiating my criticism of the sometimes present homogenising approach in the scholarship which treats Belgrade and Zagreb as interchangeable locations, this chapter also partially addresses proposition 3. It shows that not all tensions among and between the Belgrade and Zagreb feminists in the 1990s were grounded in the war reality from 1991 onward, but some originated instead from the pre-war biographical differences among them.

Chapter 6 is the last empirical chapter. It is based on data from all interviews, but primarily explores the ways in which the Belgrade and Zagreb so-called nationalist and self-declared antinationalist feminists at the time of interviewing (2009 or 2010) referred to the war-related intra-feminist dynamics in each city in the 1990s. I analyse how the feminists from each city perceived from a time distance and a changed societal context the divide in that city, as well as the differences and similarities between the positionings of the cluster they were in and those of the feminists from the other cluster. I attend to the process of naming, the laden ascribed-to designations, the portrayals of individual feminists, as well as to the related discussions on the authenticity of one's feminism and one's (anti)nationalism. Finally, I give special attention to the respondents' explicit accounts of or allusions to the still largely ongoing silence between them regarding their war-related positionings and interactions of the 1990s.

This chapter addresses propositions 1b, 1c, 2 and 3. It shows that despite the divergent positionings on the (sexual) war violence, Belgrade and Zagreb feminists from different clusters have provided assistance to refugees, and simultaneously created and transgressed (ethnic) boundaries. In addition to this, the chapter demonstrates the political value and the certain level of arbitrariness of the self-ascribed and the ascribed-to designations alike, and points to some of the pre-war differences and tensions between the feminists which were built into the later war-related frictions.

In the closing Chapter 7, by answering the research questions I present the main findings and conclusions of this analysis and suggest some key remaining issues which could be explored in subsequent research efforts.